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by

MICHAEL BURN

Je veux arracher cette fleur du temps qui passe. . . .
MOLIÈRE



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October 1943 to May 1945

The characters in this novel are imagined, and a few small liberties have been taken with names of places and dates.

It has no personal dedication, though I hope it is enjoyed by my parents, by Mary Booker and Dusty Miller, who know of the conditions in which it was written. If there were to be a dedication, it should be for the peoples of once-occupied Europe and Russia, who have suffered in a way many of our own nation cannot understand.

M. B.

December 1945

■

PART ONE

THE CASTLE
(Twenty-four hours)

•

I

A GREY castle in the middle of Europe, in the middle of Germany, jutting out of trees like a fang, high above a river and a small country town. The middle of autumn 1943. The weather has turned, the swallows that skid between the turrets in summer have flown south, and the prisoners of war, officers, who inhabit the castle, are thinking mournfully of another winter. It is early morning. They have already been on the dawn parade to be counted, and most of them have gone back to their bunks.

Bill Franklin was grumbling about the Germans.

'They *would* keep us waiting. Typical. The colder the morning the longer we have to hang about.'

'Were you up late?' Alan asked.

'Four o'clock.'

'Have any luck?'

'Luck? One useless hand after another. Whenever I did get something good it went down.'

'Why do you go on playing?'

'What else is there to do?'

Gambling, cursing the Germans and arguing about the war were his occupations. He disliked all foreigners. He usually blamed everything that went wrong on the Germans, but sometimes on the French. The prisoners pushed back into their blankets, and at nine o'clock Alan Maclaren awoke for the second time, feeling very restless and frustrated. He needed a woman. For more than a month he had not had the desire. This morning, powerfully, it revived, the beginning of a new cycle. It was very warm in bed, the warmest place in the castle, like the inside of an oven with the fire only just gone out. Once a week he aired the palliasses and shook out the blankets; during the day he left them lying made as for the night, so that the bed had the chill taken off when he turned in. He shared the room with three others. Jim Irving was already dressed and downstairs. His blankets were folded in a neat pile, and he would be busy collecting rations for

their mess. The other two were inert under their bedclothes. Bill Franklin had been gambling all night and had nothing for the morning. Tug Wilson sneezed and Alan smiled. It meant that Tug was in the same state as himself; when excited sexually, he always sneezed.

Alan pulled a blanket over his head and curled into the warm centre of the bed, his pyjama jacket open so that the palm of one hand lay flat on his stomach. He let it move. He touched his legs and thighs. They were warm and tingled. The castle was like a mausoleum, the bunk with its wooden boards like a coffin, but he was not yet dead. No, not yet quite dead. He thought of a woman called Jeanne Aumont. She was the only woman he had ever been with, and he turned on the straw, repeating her name, imagining her with him. The desire and the pain of frustration grew. Three years already, without her, without anyone, and how many more to come? It was better to be completely dead, as many of the prisoners were now, feeling nothing, hoping that one day it would all come back. No memories, no longings, perhaps that was best. But somehow he could never quite die. His body fought for life. He was twenty-six now and had been taken prisoner when he was twenty-three.

He made an effort of will and thought of the escape he had planned with Tug and Brian Clyde. It was to come off in a few days. He tried to concentrate, pitting his free mind against his imprisoned body, going over the elaborate scheme, checking details, thinking up improvements which he would suggest to Brian when he got up. But his mind slithered, climbing on glass. Escape, escape — why and where to? . . . to take part in the war, of course, in which everyone was taking part. He had decided under an impulse, goaded, and often he was not sure that he wanted to get back into the fighting. The war could manage without him. His mind was not finally made up. Jim wanted to go too, and there was not room for both of them. They were going to toss for it; to-day they would have to do it, and decide their fates. He wouldn't be sorry if he lost. Really he wasn't much interested. He didn't know what he wanted.

THE CASTLE

His thoughts went back to Jeanne, and to shake them off he got out of bed. He would have to find something to do. He did not look at the morning. All that he saw through the bars was beyond his reach and he didn't want to be tantalized. In the first days he used to lean for a long while on window sills, watching the colours growing and in the evening fading. He had stopped now. All the windows were barred at Schloss Durheim; it had once been a lunatic asylum and the bars had been put there to prevent the lunatics from committing suicide. When the time for freedom came near, he would start looking again, not until then.

The roof was low, and the sun did not come into the room until midday. The morning light he stepped into was a thin stale pool left over from the darkness. The four of them lived in a turret over the main dormitories, and the wash-room was on the floor below. He went down a spiral staircase. Shadows stuck thick in all the corners. The corridor windows were narrow and unscrubbed. Everything was cold to the touch; the iron door-handles, the fluted stone banisters, the uncarpeted stairs. Dust settled, was swept away, and settled again, as if rising from a spring. It covered clothes, shoes, books, and wedged itself inside finger-nails. It grated on the soles of his slippers and set his teeth on edge.

The floors of the corridors were long planks, endways on, which creaked. Mice had made nests underneath; they came out through holes between wall and floor, where the angle-beams had been torn up for firewood. Cigarette ends and crumpled scraps of paper lay about. Rusty nails jutted from the rafters. In one corner where there had formerly been a stove, a disconnected pipe hung loose. The peeling discoloured walls looked as if they had smallpox.

The castle had been a prison in three successive wars. The French of 1870 had left their inscriptions, the British of 1914-18 had left theirs. In this war had been written 'F—— Hitler, *Deutschland kaput*, long live Stalin, Roosevelt, de Gaulle, Churchill'. The walls seemed to sweat with these outbursts of

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hope and despair and anger. There were morose comments, resigned comments, Christian comments, thoughts of love, spring, freedom, the countryside, the sea, and there were challenges and execrations addressed to the Germans, the unchanging jailers. Five hundred years ago, when log fires roared under the vaulted ceilings, and rich nobles made themselves at home in the rooms, or strolled about the courts and terraces in bright tunics and swishing dresses, the castle would have been a pleasant place for those who lived in it. It could not be imagined now without enslavement of some kind. The restriction of the human spirit infected it. It clung to the walls, a disease, demoralizing those who could not make themselves immune. Doors had been walled up, bars had been reinforced, dense coils of barbed wire planted on the roof, where efforts had been made to get away. The dead-ends of a dozen discovered tunnels branched outwards from the walls, like long-abandoned railway lines.

Brian Clyde was in the bath-room, dowsing a khaki suit in blue dye, so that it could be turned into a civilian suit.

'You're up early, Brian.'

'Half-past nine,' he answered. His manner was curt; it was intended as a rebuke.

Alan put his shaving things on a shelf above the basins and turned on a tap. The water would not come out. Brian had brought a pail of hot water from the kitchen, but did not offer any, and Alan didn't ask him. It was wanted for dyeing, dyeing was duty, and to Brian duty was quite sacred.

'What shall I do this morning, Brian?'

'The usual round. Time the sentries. See if there are any new men on.'

'The relief's always at eleven o'clock now. It has been for a fortnight.'

'They may change it. Is Tug dressed?'

'No. Still in bed.'

'H'm.'

Brian compressed his lips and went on with the dyeing. His

THE CASTLE

silence also was censorious. He was a regular soldier. His only idea was to escape. He gave his whole time to it. He seldom spoke about anything else and had no close friends. People admired him and as far as they were still capable of it were sorry for him. He was a lonely hermit of action, for ever watching, planning, preparing, until the moment arrived to go, and never successful. No prison had been able to hold him, yet he had never got home. Bad luck dogged him. At the last minute a guard recognized him, or a dog barked, and back he had to come, over and over again. And people who took no trouble at all had reached England. Poor Brian. His tight stern face seemed to have been wound-up; to express any lighter emotion it would have to be unwound and remoulded. He was twenty-five, and like many of the prisoners had gone straight from boyhood to middle-age. His face had set, his impulses were all controlled.

The taps gurgled and discharged. People came in with towels, in pyjamas and greatcoats. Someone had a cold bath.

'What do you do that for?'

'Wakes me up.'

'What for?'

There was no answer to this. All looked on in mild surprise, while the bather rubbed and splashed. Alan stripped and soaped himself all over. He washed three times a day, and the water in the basin was black each time. Dirt floated about the floor and stuck to the duckboards.

'Make Tug get up,' said Brian, 'he's got to finish the maps.'

'He never gets up till after ten.'

'Make him. He's too bloody lazy. He's getting as bad as Bill.'

'He'll do them all right.'

'Possibly, at the last moment. That's not good enough. After all, it is his scheme.'

'Only his idea. You're the boss.'

'Tell him to get up, then. Make it an order.'

'I'll try.'

Brian grunted and went out, with the dyed uniform in a pail.

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One of the others waited until the door had closed, and said to Alan:

'Works you pretty hard, doesn't he?'

'He does most of it. Tug and I are pretty idle.'

'He ought to take it easy. He's as nervous as hell. Make him go to sleep. Jim says he was watching the sentries all night.'

'Are you sure?'

'Don't know myself. I go to bed to sleep. Jim woke up twice and he was at the window, each time, still dressed.'

'There's no need for it,' Alan said. 'We can find out what we want to know without that.'

'Well, can't you stop him? It'd make him a bit easier to get on with.'

'He'd pay no attention. He enjoys it really.'

The others went out, and Alan finished washing. A piece of soap had been left behind. He thought once, then picked it up and rolled it in his towel.

Back in his room, the shapes had not moved.

'Tug! Get up.'

A head emerged, like a mole.

'Do what?'

'Get up.'

'Why?'

'Brian wants the maps done.'

'What's the time?'

'Nearly ten.'

'Tell him to go to hell.'

'Come on.'

'Damn Brian. Tell him to stop worrying. I'll do them all right.'

The uncouth head went to ground again. A heap of shirt, vest, sweater, left inside one another as worn, fell off on to the floor. He was the kind that does everything by fits. The books above his bed were the tombstones of past crazes: handbooks, of sailing, from the time when he was going to design a yacht; farming books, from the time when he was going to leave business after

the war and emigrate to New Zealand; books on motor cars, from the time when he was going to start a garage; German grammars, French grammars, Russian grammars, none more than glanced at. Now he was going to escape. The plan was his in outline. He had flashes of inspiration about it, and left the organization to Brian. Everybody liked him. He was clumsy, cheerful and one of the few whose impulses were still unguarded. He didn't at all mind making a fool of himself. Above his bunk was a wooden carving, which he had done himself, of a naked woman with pointed breasts and her ankles crossed. Sometimes he painted her brown as a berry, like an Indian, sometimes Chinese yellow, sometimes pink and white, English. At present she was a negress.

In a prison where the prisoners live all together an arc-lamp beats through them. They are X-rayed, and there is little they can hide except with great cunning and forethought. At Schloss Durheim each prisoner had for himself a bunk, some shelves and a strip of wall, with a space at a table. The bunks, single or double-tiered, ran flush with the walls like pigeon holes. This was property, environment. Each was characteristic; the inscription of an individual on the void.

Bill Franklin had a great number of sporting books, but he seldom read them. He liked to be thought a country squire. He had thick yellow hair and was energetic and proudly stupid. He was rich. He had a photograph of his relations, which had been taken at his brother's wedding, the men in uniform or in tailcoats which looked like uniform, the women in furs and orchids, wealthy and sure of themselves, holding themselves upright with one foot forward. They stood in a proud row, solid as a majority opinion, or defiant as people facing a firing squad, the cream of the middle class. Bill was as arrogant as they looked, but here in prison he was not so sure of himself. His confidence depended so much on his possessions, on his environment, that when they were removed he was ill at ease. He had nothing of his own, and if the war went on much longer he would go under. He was about thirty.

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Alan's corner was non-committal; someone not yet determined, perhaps never to have sharp outlines. His books were a short history of science, something popular about the moon and the stars, a Bible seldom opened, the stories of Wodehouse and Edgar Allan Poe, and a book of modern poetry. His mother had sent him several photographs of herself. She sat in a garden beside a box-hedge, with the house in the background, small and white and demure; she wore tweeds, and was about to give a piece of sugar to a cocker spaniel. In another she stood outside a canteen she had organized, surrounded by several helpers whose expressions, like the expression of the cocker spaniel, showed admiration for her. In profile she looked a masterful woman, cultured and probably with strict principles; handsome, with a Roman nose like a keel, and her hair coiled in an artistic pre-Raphaelite way, like a bird's-nest. She was a little forbidding, and Tug had compared her to a battleship.

Alan began his tour of the castle, seeing the rooms clear of Germans so that Brian could go ahead with the civilian clothes, and noting through the windows which sentries were on duty. About eighty men lived on each floor of his wing, and there were three floors, and three communal dining-rooms. In each of the other rooms lived and slept ten or fifteen or more men; Alan was lucky to be in a room for four.

The drones stayed in bed as long as they could, still asleep or reading. The workers, like Jim Irving, had been up and busy since first *appel*. He passed them hurrying along corridors, balancing tinned food on wooden boards. They cleaned out bowls and frying-pans. Using the ends of bottles they converted biscuits into a fine dust which was made into pastry. They checked catalogues of stores, licking their pencils in a professional way, and prepared menus from German and Red Cross rations. Because they had something useful to do, they whistled, said good morning politely, and did not appear to be discontented.

'Good morning, Alan. Anything we can do for you?'

It was like being in a shop, or like children playing at one.

'Good morning, Alan. Got a light?'

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Most of them smoked too much, whenever they got the cigarettes. Their front teeth and fingers were yellowed. At intervals they had spasms of anxiety about their health and tried to stop smoking. But it was one of their drugs, and they had difficulty; smoking, sleeping and self-abuse.

In the dining-rooms were stiff square tables, end to end or at right angles, like dominoes. The castle entirely lacked soft outlines. Everything was rigid, rectangular, uninviting: hard stiff chairs, hard stiff tables, beds that were strips of wood with shorter strips laid crosswise, windows with vertical iron bars intersected with horizontal iron bars. It was life inside a theorem. The prisoners took on some of the rigidity themselves, becoming no younger, but much thinner, with more lines, more bones showing, their features sharper and contracted. There was a gap in their supplies and furniture between bare essentials and expensive luxuries. They had plenty of sponges, tooth-brushes, white china mugs, plates, knives, and forks, and they had costly books, gramophone records, engraved cigarette cases showing above their side-pockets, and light fleecy quilts sent out to them from London shops, so that they were not badly off, not in a hell. But they had none of the intermediary comforts, no arm-chairs, no carpets, cushions or electric fires.

People hoarded, almost morbidly. They had never forgotten the first months of their captivity, when they had next to nothing, and rags and scrap were precious. So piles of tins accumulated, gathering dust, under beds and in corners, and tiers of cardboard boxes mounted on the tops of cupboards. Don't get rid of them . . . some day we may need them. Trivial objects survived for weeks. The prisoners took a very long time to reach decisions. A man who had been reading at a mess-table got up and knocked his chair over. He looked at it for several seconds and left it lying. It occurred to Alan to pick it up, but he too left it. There was no hurry. Books would be lent and kept for months, without a page being turned. What did it matter? the war would still be going on. Delay became a malady and a form of revenge. The days trailed past superciliously, never giving the

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prisoners a lift. They got their own back on time by ignoring it.

He went into the silence-room, a big vault that always seemed empty, though in fact there was never room to sit down there. It had a high plastered ceiling. The few chairs were made out of packing-cases. On the tables were scattered German propaganda magazines, weeks' old, and British technical magazines, months old. A big tiled stove, not lit till full winter and therefore not yet, blocked half the centre of the room. The readers watched him under their eyelids, afraid that he was going to bring a chair into their corner and break the illusion of privacy.

'Any Germans?' he asked.

A man shook his head vaguely, sucking a pencil, with the rapt air of one engaged on a novel. At least fifty novels had been started in the castle; they were like tunnels, a means of escape, usually ended halfway through.

People wrote, painted, composed, made things out of pieces of metal and scraps of wood. The Artist, with a capital A, was Geoffrey Larkin. He was the one to whom people brought their sketches for criticism. He was supposed to be very good. He was in Alan's mess and Alan had known him since 1940.

He found Geoff just getting up, still in pyjamas, rubbing his scalp in front of a mirror with the points of his fingers; he was vain and fancied he was going bald.

'Well, Alan, how's your great plan?'

His manner was rather down-from-above, and his questions put as if he did not want an answer.

'I've come to look out of your window.'

'It's all free. When's the attempt?'

'Next week, I hope.'

'It's getting bloody cold. Thank God I'm not going.'

He shivered and clambered back into his top bunk. Books and sketches were everywhere. He was thirty and painted as Brian escaped, on and on, determined to be a success. He painted with his mind, mechanically, without feeling. He sat down at a barred window, resolved to do something, and off he started. He was always correcting, adding, making finicky little altera-

tions. Alan knew nothing about it, but did not think much of what Geoff did.

In the early days, before he stopped looking out of the windows, Alan had often wished that he could paint. His longing to be free, and the long hours of gazing and absorbing made him see many lights and many colours where formerly he might only have seen one or never looked at all. Views, like people, came alive for him piece by piece and suddenly one day they seemed to become integrated and he saw them as a whole. He could not paint them and he could not describe them, but they became part of him and the impression lasted. But Geoff never seemed to absorb. He was in such a hurry. He wanted to arrive. Prison was fresh material and he was cashing in on it. He saw himself the hero of a London exhibition; later a book would be published, called *Sketches from Prison*, and his name would be made. Usually the bars or the barbed wire appeared in his drawings; he wanted everyone to know how unfortunate he had been, yet nothing he had done so far had moved Alan in the least. It was all rather flat and photographic. Geoff was a still life himself.

Alan sat in the window alcove, waiting for the sentries to be relieved. The little town hung far below, a cluster of grey roofs and steep provincial streets crowded as if he could gather them up into his hand. A river, fifty yards across, which would soon be flooding the outlying fields, slipped between the houses, and the road bridge over it was the pivot of the view. The river was like lips, and the fields that arched away behind and beyond were like high cheekbones; honey-coloured fields melting into horizons of dark forests, and the river fading into a blue dust of hills. Four kilometres away a spire rose, and near it the turrets of another castle. Europe enveloped them, immense and turbulent, expanding beyond the forest and the tilled fields; Europe with her towers and genius and self-destruction, the castle with its living dead.

The view was not majestic, not beautiful, but because the prisoners yearned for freedom, to them it seemed beautiful. Really it was plain like a plain face and reminded Alan of the

military landscapes on which he used to plot targets as a recruit. Half right a church spire. Central foreground to central background, a secondary road. Half left, factory chimneys and a weir. The factory was half the town. It had sucked in a sprawl of dignified outhouses which had once been the castle's stables. The weathercock still had princely arms gilded on it, and a great gate and court-yard showed where the carriages must have driven in and out. A narrow sluice, diverted from the river, ran through the town alongside the factory, and the roaring of the mill wheel came to the prisoners with a thudding intensity, day and night.

Far away and far below. The Germans went about their unknown errands in the streets, crossing the bridge, fishing in the river, looking up at the castle with blurred faces, like rubbed shillings. Most of the women wore mourning. The men were either very old or very young. They were all proud of the castle. The prisoners might have been their private property; and the prisoners looked down on the town, and it grew into them. They would never forget it.

Alan was curious about one house. It was like his home, small, square, white and one-storeyed, built on the artificial island between the river and the sluice, at the sharp corner of a grass peninsula. It had the aloofness of a country house, yet it was obviously connected with the factory and he imagined that it belonged to the owner or the manager. He pictured the anxieties, ambitions and lives of the people who lived in it. It put him in touch with the simple existence from which he was cut off. He imagined them, sometimes he saw them, at meals, dressing and undressing in their own bed-rooms, going to work in the morning, making plans in order to carry them out the next day and not in some far off future. He spied on their movements and guessed at their relationship to one another. A tottering old frau occasionally forced herself along the short drive to the white gate and back. She always wore black and at times a much younger woman supported her. A third generation, a boy and a girl, played on the lawn in summer, shouting and making gestures at the castle windows.

THE CASTLE

He watched now. No car was to be seen anywhere. All seemed to have gone back centuries. He often had this impression about Germany and the Germans. They had been so modern in war, that other countries had been left behind, and yet here in the heart of their own country everything seemed to be so unmodern, almost primitive. They had gone ahead of themselves, were trying to live beyond their means. An aged carriage, like the carriage of Napoleon captured at Waterloo, was being hosed in the old stable-yard. Oxen drew ribbed carts across the bridge. Suddenly a young officer appeared, running full-tilt, from the direction of the station, where a puff of smoke dragged above the houses. He raced up the front steps, and soon the two women came out with him. The children were dancing round in excitement. They stared for a moment at the castle. He was very smart and wore the ridiculous little sword carried by German officers in their Sunday best. They went through a private entrance into the factory yards, and men working there stopped to shake hands and have a chat.

These people, thought Alan, are not surprised or horrified at wars. War is part of this climate. In Frederick's time these fields were ravaged year after year. Napoleon's soldiers may have been billeted in this white house, their horses may have been stabled here. The old woman probably remembered Bismarck and the days when Germany was a rising nation; she would remember, vividly, 1914, and the Kaiser, and Versailles, and the Russian revolution. She and the people who lived here were near these things. They were accustomed to meteors and avalanches and sudden victories and long ordeals, and now their country, like an Australian family, after two generations was going back to shirtsleeves. The fortune would hold out another year, perhaps. The young officer had returned from fighting the Russians in the east or the British and Americans in the south. The children were still being told that Germany was a heroic nation battling against the hosts of spiritual annihilation, and on official holidays they waved swastikas. They would grow up to something different. He asked himself what would become of them, and of the factory

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and the house, in a little while, when the British or the Russians or the Americans or all three arrived there, as arrive they would. It would be something new, people said in speeches, but it was hard to break the spell of the past and this territory, Europe, had been like a magnet to armour. Who would take the iron out of the mountain? Who would end these wars?

Who would tell him how it had all happened? Always he seemed to be at a tangent to events, not in them. He was well-placed now to observe and to consider, up there in the gods, yet he felt cut off, unable to penetrate. He could not enter into the lives of other people. There they were, walking about in the streets, existing in the white house, flinging back shutters, hanging up washing in back-yards, with connexions in time and space reaching far away from themselves, and here they were in hundreds in the castle, crowding in on him. Yet they were separate, all of them, Germans and all; and he had a feeling that this separation was permanent.

'Geoff! Geoff Larkin,' he said. 'You know that white house down by the river? The one next to the factory, with the swimming pool. Why don't you paint it?'

No answer.

'Geoff. Bring it to life. Imagine . . .'

No answer. The Artist had gone to sleep, his cigarette dangling on his lower lip. Anyhow Geoff was not the man for it. Jim Irving might have done it. In the early days Jim used to write an imaginative diary of their lives, but for a year he had written nothing. Alan felt sad; all their clocks were running down.

It was time now for the relief. The greencoat sentries patrolled the battlements and examined the wire, hands dug into greatcoat pockets, rifle and bayonet slung over the right shoulder, bored. The friendly ones grinned at the prisoners, but that was all. They knew they were on a good bargain. Guarding a castle with barred windows, full of unarmed men in low health, was better than sweating on the southern front or freezing on the eastern. So in order not to be sent away they did their duty

THE CASTLE

conscientiously. Only three attempts to escape had succeeded in three years. A hundred feet below the battlements, level with the streets, grew more wire shrubberies. Most of the prisoners now thought escape to be hopeless.

Six new sentries appeared in single file, each one dropping off at his post. The relief made the prisoners laugh. The old and the new sentry stood opposite one another, clicked their heels, shouted something and did a sort of pirouette. The six old sentries were marched away. They looked pale and yawned frequently. They worked long shifts. If they got two clear nights' sleep in a week they thought themselves lucky. Alan took out the notebook Brian used for reconnaissance reports, and filled in the columns in code, one for the time, the other for the sentry posts:

11.00 Ropey from Dopey

Pieface from Snuffler

Egg from Bastard, etc. etc.

Brian worked on this information each evening. His plan was to attempt the escape against the sentries he knew to be the least alert. He had watched the routine of most Germans in the castle. They were aware of being watched. They had orders now to shoot anyone seen tampering with the bars of windows.

A siren sounded, raucous and prolonged. The sleepers awoke and began to dress. Larkin woke up and made some notes.

'Had a good sleep, Geoff?' Alan said.

'Oh, I was thinking. I always think best lying in bed.'

'You were snoring.'

'For a little, perhaps.'

'I can't think in that position. I can't think much in any position. In bed, in the early morning, I think about women. So I have to get up.'

'You should control yourself.'

'Yes, I should.'

Alan left Larkin's room and crossed the court-yard to pay his last call. This room faced away from the town, overlooking a thick wood which made a horseshoe all round the castle on the

other side. The mill wheel was audible but faint. The upper branches of the trees, which mounted in tiers up a hillside like a massed choir, were ablaze with red and yellow and copper. They shed their leaves over the battlements, where the sentries kicked them into heaps. It was here that the escape would take place. The wood gave good cover and dropped abruptly to a stream; the stream joined the river, clear of the town, so that they would not have to pass through streets.

A gramophone emitted a threadbare tune, and Marcus Litauer and Stephen Morshead were playing chess with silent devotion in a corner. Morshead was small and beetle-like, with spectacles; he read economics most of the day and was almost a recluse. Nobody liked him except Litauer, who took an extravagant interest in everybody. He was a rough heavy Jew, a settler in Palestine for the last twenty years. He was strongly built, but had gone to fat, sweated at slight exertions, and looked like a retired wrestler. He watched the board with triumph, sitting with shoulders hunched and head sunk, as if he had no neck.

'Now what are you going to do, my dear?' he said.

Morshead frowned and put his head in his hands. Alan began to whistle in time to the gramophone.

'Would you mind not whistling?' said Morshead.

'Why not let him? What are you going to do now? It is check.'

Litauer's voice went up in slight surprise. People called him an actor, but really it was not so. His hands came out of his pockets, his eyebrows soared, as the words came out of his mouth. He was expressive with everything; probably his toes twitched too. 'Mate in three moves. Look, my dear economist . . . it is unavoidable . . . if you go here, and if you go there, and if you take me . . .' he lifted the pieces with large fingers, leant back, shrugged his shoulders. 'You are *kaput*.'

'I suppose you're right.'

'Use your weets. Work it out. It will make no deference. And go on whistling, you in the window. Enjoy yourself. Whistle a lullaby and send me asleep before *appel*.'

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He wound himself into his sleeping-bag, till he looked like a plump chrysalis. His bald head, tufted above the ears, stared at Alan and his black eyes twinkled, creasing at the corners like splintered glass.

'What is your name?'

'Mine? Maclaren.'

'Maclaren? So. Another of these Scotchmen.'

'Not very Scots.'

'Not very? How much? Three-quarters? Seven-eighths? Or perhaps you have a Scottish name for business reasons? You know it is very advantageous.'

'My father was Scots.'

'And your mother?'

'English.'

'So. But what are you doing in that window? The view is the other side. Don't you weesh to see the best view? This is the poor quarter. What for you come to the ghetto?'

'I'm on duty.'

'On duty? So you are up to some nefarious activity, *hein?* An escape?'

The word nefarious was used by the prisoners to mean escaping, and the Jew spoke it with pride, showing that he had learnt the jargon.

'When? Who wit? or is it secret?'

'Yes, it's secret.'

'Then everybody in the castle knows except me. What for you do these dangerous things? What point is there in escaping? Why not stay here and work, like me? You would become wise. . . .'

Alan was annoyed, because he could not think of an answer. Litauer sighed and closed his eyes. Morshead left the chess-board resentfully and put his nose in a book. It was nearly time for the second *appel*, and the inner court-yard was beginning to fill.

The castle was a jungle of passages and yards, and this inner yard was like a clearing. Its walls were cliffs with windows in them. A virginia creeper climbed one wall, as high as the second

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story. Another had died, hacked away at the roots by a prisoner with a grudge that would not keep; its withered tendrils still hung in crevices. The yard was fifty yards by twenty, unevenly cobbled and on a slope, and it was the only place the prisoners were allowed for exercise. In summer they played games and sunbathed there. A notice-board carried announcements . . .

'A baby cinema has been obtained and will show a film of German exploration in the south seas . . . The Shakespeare society will read *Antony and Cleopatra* at . . . No one may be in possession of coloured pencils . . . The High Command forbid unauthorized communication with the sentries . . . an issue of dried vegetables will be made at . . . ' — all these things were to be learnt about in the court-yard.

Above there floated slowly, on this particular day, an acre of low-hanging grey sky. When the clouds moved, the castle also seemed to be moving, like a ship, and the prisoners in the steep yard were like men in a hold, battened down and herded, drifting with companions they had not chosen on a journey they could not see.

Three jabs on the siren; this was the last signal. Alan ran up to his room to make sure that Tug had got up. Tug was all legs and arms, loosely associated with clothes, and came down the stairs like a Catherine wheel. Jim Irving and Bill Franklin were already outside. Bill was complaining about his bad luck the night before; had he not mistaken the cards he would have made a fortune.

'It's these bloody foreign packs,' he said. 'You can't tell a king from a jack.'

As a result he had lost fifty pounds sterling.

II

WHILE people were assembling for *appel*, Alan found a corner where he could stand by himself and look on without being spoken to. It was in a recessed corner of the yard and those who

occupied it were usually left to themselves. It was understood that they wished this. All felt at times the craving to cut themselves off, and there was no privacy. To be seen there was often the sign of an escaper, and both Alan and Jim had been there a good deal of late.

The Germans in charge of Schloss Durheim did not behave with great brutality, nor with sympathy. They obeyed their orders and did nothing to make the cramped conditions more tolerable. The prisoners avoided them and they avoided the prisoners. Lack of exercise was one of the worst deprivations. People were seldom allowed outside the court-yard, and Alan watched them walking round it. Their faces were wax-pale. They wore battle-dress, and the polished badges of their regiments gave them a dusty gaiety, as if they were relics taken out of a museum case and set to clockwork. A doctor had been asked about their health. He said: 'What worries me most is that they go round and round that yard until they nearly drive me mad.' Round and round. Once they had been individuals but the castle had got the better of them. It drained them like a leech, until nearly all subsided into a grey neutrality. It was rather like an aquarium. The fish gyrated, and grew accustomed and from time to time a few of them pressed their noses against the glass.

Larkin called their conversations parallel monologues. They talked about the war they could not influence, about strategy of which they knew little, about a future with which they were not in touch. Each of them, as he walked, talked straight ahead of him, his words flung anywhere but at his companion, who did not listen. The answers were all known in advance. They behaved with politeness, but they were bored with each other and with themselves.

The youngest longed to get back into the fighting. When aeroplanes swung overhead, swooping low over the turrets to tease them, the airmen ran to the windows and thought with rage of their free life. The sailors paced up and down, utterly jaded. The soldiers heard of the great victories in Africa and

Russia and remembered their own wretched defeats two and three years earlier in France, Norway, Greece. They brooded, until they developed a personal feeling of shame about these failures, as if they had only themselves to reproach. Tug had moods when he thought himself to have been permanently disgraced. Brian was in this state all the time. Brian hated the Germans, really hated them, not like Bill Franklin noisily and querulously, but with a silent clenched contempt. They were his enemies, the thing that he was up against, and he could not bear it that they had the better of him.

Some prisoners took the line, we're lucky to be alive. Others forgot their friends who had been killed, and recalled with resentment only those who had got home and were now majors, colonels, comfortable on staffs. They felt acutely that they were out of it. The circumstances which controlled them never changed. They controlled nothing and had no chance, so it seemed, to assert themselves; wheels turning in the air, matches that did not strike.

Others took their decisions for them. The Germans fixed most of their routine and held them to it with rigid conscientiousness. The little that remained was left to officials of their own. The narcotic habit of dependence seeped into them. 'Fall in' shouted their Brigadier, a soldier of both German wars, who had lost neither his voice nor his power to command; and those in the neighbourhood edged and shuffled away, so as not to be conspicuous, not in any way to be singled out. They were glad to have someone who could act for them with vigour, and some of them seemed to have poured away what was left of their own energy and initiative into him, taking his standards and his judgments on matters that were not military at all rather than work out their own. Tug refused to be stampeded. He had a head of his own, often wrong. He fell in on one spot and stayed there, blunt and positive, while the rest surged round him; it was a gesture of individuality.

Those who were losing access to their own enterprise were usually aware of it and felt it slipping from them; but as long as

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they were prisoners they did not think they could do much about it. A few sank so far that they would never have the leverage to emerge. It could be recognized. They would not accept responsibility, their voices became plaintive and irritable, a sign of the powerless; and they made remarks like 'it's not my fault, I wash my hands of it'. The danger was greatest for the older men. The young took warning from others or from moments of illumination in themselves, and found means to shore themselves up.

Because they risked sliding into a negative attitude towards life, it became important to have something to do. The escapers went ahead with plans in which they had little confidence. Others organized escapes in which they were not going to take part, so as not to lose the habit of taking charge. Others were cooks and mess presidents, and this kept them busy. There were minor posts to be filled under the colonel: to be in charge of laundry, or of education, and so on, for which files had to be kept and arrangements published. It was not action, it was scarcely activity, but it supported people. Sometimes they spoke with bitterness of these functions: 'What did you do in the great war for civilization?' . . . 'I sorted the parcels in a prisoner-of-war camp.' A few did nothing at all, or like Bill Franklin next to nothing. The rest were students. Men have to have an enemy. To keep sharp there must be a whetstone. Facts were an enemy and a whetstone. The students forgot the war. They withdrew behind technical manuals, planning for their futures. Or they dodged from profession to profession, uncertain what they wanted. Or they became absorbed in learning for its own sake and lifted their feet entirely out of events. The river flowed past them and they let it go. Mists parted and the world unfolded; they were not unhappy, not at a loose end.

The padre was one of these. He was a scholar, unmarried and young, very much interested in the Byzantine Empire. The yard reminded him of a college quadrangle, the prisoners of his pupils, and he made donnish jokes at which he laughed happily himself. He was a little skittish. Most of the time he lived in the clouds,

but occasionally he felt lonely and came dipping into their midst with unexpected acts of kindness, using bad language and talking about women in order to be one of them. Then he took off again and stayed in the altitudes for months. Alan sheered away from him. There was something goody-goody, almost obscene about his equanimity. He made it seem that their lifeless condition was normal, even blessed; he was not indignant enough, he did not mind.

Morshead studied methodically. It was dull stuff, but he knew what he wanted. He was analysing the economic society, and that was one of the reasons nobody had much to say to him. In May he did Banking, in June the Stock Exchange, in July, August and September the Structure of Competitive Industry, and now he was on Monopolies. No one could deflect him; the war might have been on Jupiter.

The prisoners were confirmed gossips. A Frenchman arriving at the castle said that their femininity was what struck him most. It wasn't strange. The things closest to them usually interest women more than men: people's relationships, household arrangements, and the best way to serve food. They nodded their heads over new recipes and a few of them grew so fond of cooking that they did nothing else for years. Rumours ran about like quicksilver. They talked a great deal about one another. Like garrulous housewives, they leant forward with sidelong glances, speaking in swift sharp whispers; even famous heroes, their breasts covered with medals, acquired this manner.

The court-yard was like a bazaar. To-day's rumour was about Colonel Anstruther. The Germans were going to send him to a place called Budgronz, on the eastern front, where hundreds of Polish officers' bodies were said by the Germans to have been discovered in a mass grave. The Russians, of course, had done it, and the Germans were organizing personally conducted tours to have a look. An international commission had visited the scene of the crime, and its findings, which agreed with the German version exactly, had been published in all the German newspapers; this commission had been composed of doctors and

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journalists from German-occupied territories and a number of persons from neutral countries who were sympathetic to the Nazis. The prisoners could not help feeling flattered that one of them should have been asked to go. It made them feel important again, but the propriety of accepting was questioned.

'No, he oughtn't to go. It's playing into the Germans' hands. He'll be photographed by the graveside looking horrified and everyone in Europe will think that the British believe it.'

'Don't you believe it?'

'No. The Germans did it. They'd do anything. It's all part of the plan to separate us and Russia.'

'Why not go? It might be rather interesting. Anyhow it'd be a change.'

A plump red-faced sailor called Peter Wade and his friend Fred Martin were talking. There was a little group of them, all bored with themselves and with the castle. In the castle, or outside it, they would always inhabit the smaller circle of existence. There are two circles, the smaller of routine and the larger of imagination. A change in the larger circle, such as a total revolution or the growth or expansion of ideas, did not make itself deeply felt on people like Peter Wade, but any change in the smaller circle seemed to be of great importance to them. They were like people living in a small room, who never saw the city or the country beyond the city. They made no life of their own. They depended on events. Usually, even in the castle, they could depend on some event to keep them occupied. If the time of parade was put forward, or the guard company was reinforced, or things began to be stolen, they could talk about it for a long time, and this made the hours go by.

In peace they had been happy with their jobs. In war they had excitement as well as a job. Whatever they had been given to do they had done, becoming creatures of habit. They had become accustomed to action. Peter Wade had been captured, almost paralysed, on the high seas, after having spent four days on a raft, and before that he had been on the Arctic and Atlantic convoys. In the castle they were at a loss. They drifted like

flotsam, pushed along by an occasional incident or a rumour. Fred Martin wanted to take it out of the Germans. When he had had some hooch he used to shout at them out of the windows. He had great spirit and in the sky had been in his element. He was always hoping the Germans would give him some order so that he could refuse to obey it, not from patriotism nor from contempt, but to occupy and assert himself. The other prisoners said it was pointless; but often, if he started some demonstration against the Germans, baiting them and making fools of them, others waited to see how it was going and if it was successful, followed him.

'Look at that fool Martin,' they said; but when the Germans began to get red in the face they were soon laughing and, crowding behind Martin, began to copy what he was doing. It was his obsession that nobody backed him up. He thought that if everybody did by plan what he did on his own the Germans would be unnerved. 'You've only got to oppose them,' he said, 'and they'll come to heel.' It had not always turned out like this. They had court martialled him three times for opposing them and he had spent three months in a fortress on bread and water.

'It's a damned disgrace if Anstruther goes,' he was saying. 'We might as well run up a swastika flag. I don't mind a damn if the Russians did it or not. That isn't the point. The fact is the Huns want us to go and Anstruther's doing what they want. I say he bloody well ought to be stopped. If the Brigadier was a man he'd stop him.'

Fred Martin was unfriendly towards the Brigadier, who had put an end to his demonstrations. Most people were very frightened of the Brigadier, but Fred Martin thought him weak.

There was another little group round Colonel Anstruther. To-day of course the spotlight was on him. He wore a thick coat with an opossum collar. He was a broad, rather paunchy man with a satisfied expression, and in England he ran a business in the West Country. Nobody disliked him, but nobody trusted him. He was thought to be too much out for himself. Somehow

he always managed to get more parcels than anybody else. He seemed to have friends in all the neutral countries and they looked after him very well. He shared his food and cigarettes among his friends and those who were not his friends were critical of him. He thought the Germans to be individually foolish but politically he spoke in quite a friendly way about them. In 1940, when they had only been captured a few weeks, he had made a speech to about four hundred other prisoners in which he had said there would probably be a compromise peace. He never mentioned this now and most of them had forgotten it.

'Well Colonel,' someone asked, 'what are you going to do? Go?'

He shrugged his shoulders and smiled blandly. They envied his *savoir-faire*. He gave the impression of being an important man and took it as of right that the Germans should have invited him, of all the other prisoners, to see the alleged atrocities.

'Of course it's all their game,' he said, 'they can't pull the wool over my eyes. I know quite well what they're up to.'

'But will you go?'

'Oh, I see no harm in it. After all, I might see something interesting. Besides how can I resist? They can do what they like. I don't think it's worth getting shot.'

A wicket in the great gate opened and a dozen German sentries filed in. They took up their posts at the stairway entrances, holding their rifles horizontally in front of them, so that nobody could leave the courtyard. They had doltish inanimate faces, faces that did not seem to have changed for centuries, not since the days when Albrecht Dürer drew them. Their ears were very large, their noses bulbous, their necks spotty and their hands gnarled and wrinkled. They belonged to the Middle Ages and would have looked more at home carrying pikes and battle-axes.

The German officer on duty came in behind them. His name was Treidfeld. He looked like a bull. He was very stupid, but the prisoners preferred him to all the other German officers because he was correct with them. He had no sense of humour

and had been Fred Martin's chief butt. If he felt that the English were laughing at him his face clouded over and suddenly he lost his temper. He seldom spoke to them except on duty, but he had sentimental ideas about war and believed the nations that had fought one another, as the British and Germans had fought, understood one another and should be friends. He wore medals from the last war. He despised the French, because he thought they had no discipline and no 'mass creative impulse', but above all because they had been defeated. The French in the castle drove him speechless with anger. They would not fall in to be counted. When they did fall in they would not stand to attention. 'Officers!' he shouted at them, 'call yourselves officers!' The French looked at him pityingly and he stalked off, mumbling to himself. He had a heavy-chested, heavy-footed wife who came sometimes to stay with him in the Kommandantur. When she was not there he went with a girl from the village and one morning he had come on *appel* with heavy lines under his eyes and a smudge of lipstick on his cheek.

The prisoners fell in in several squads with the Brigadier and his Adjutant in front. Peter Wade and Fred Martin watched Treidfeld hopefully, longing for something unexpected to happen so that they could start a demonstration. The senior officer in each squad called it to attention and gave a perfunctory salute to Treidfeld, who saluted back. Few of the prisoners troubled to bring their feet together. Brian Clyde and a few of the regular soldiers clicked their heels as if on a British parade and stared grimly and rigidly in front of them until told to stand at ease. Treidfeld was very conscientious about the count. The prisoners had fooled him so many times; he was prepared to spend all day there if he thought anyone was missing. Alan was standing next to Tony Masterman.

'Is there a play to-night?' he asked.

'Yes,' said Tony, 'are you coming?'

'Might as well.'

There was a theatre in the castle which had once been used by the lunatics and plays were put on whenever the Germans

allowed. Tony Masterman took all the feminine leads. He was twenty-two, a naval lieutenant with a pretty face, pink and white cheeks and fair hair. He had taken a lot of persuading and in order to show that he was not effeminate he put on a very brisk voice and a very hard manner off stage. Consequently his natural charm had gone. When he was first captured he had been very innocent and boyish, and it had been a pleasure to talk to him. When he got home he would be unrecognizable. He liked to be thought a cynic who had seen the hollowness of things. He had many admirers and there had been curious jealousies and sulks about him, and one or two fights.

The British in their squads all seemed to be very much like one another. They looked solid and responsible and still cheerful in spite of the years they had been there. There was more variety about the French. There were a few Dutch, very stiff and smart. Half a dozen Poles stood in a group by themselves. They hated all the Germans with ferocity, and put as much insolence as possible into their salutes. Most of them had lost wives, families, everything. They went through quite a ceremony, saluting their own senior officer first so as to show no respect for the Germans, and as Treidfeld went past they followed him with a look of brooding and concentrated disgust.

At right angles to the officers, near the gate, stood about forty orderlies who did the cooking and fatigues and swept the floors of the castle. In spite of the cold weather some of them were in shirt sleeves. They looked critically at the officers, now and then nudging one another. They had come from working parties and stalags and had seen a good deal which the officers had not seen in the mines and on the farms. It was an experience for them to be in an officers' camp. They had never seen their leaders so close, and suddenly Alan wondered what they thought of him and of the rest. It was hard to tell and he wished that he knew them better. They gave the officers that same look of cool and devastating superiority which they gave the Germans. It was a most unsettling look. He had seen it on the faces of his own soldiers in Norway. It had a sort of challenging assurance. In

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England he had seen them give it to women. It seemed to say 'Well, what are you going to do next? And whatever it is it's your own look out.'

These soldiers lived in a separate part of the castle. They were the only prisoners allowed outside. They went to fetch rations and parcels and they looked healthier than the officers, most of whom had lost their muscles. They had girls in the village. They kept the German N.C.O.s completely under their thumb and traded in food and cigarettes for themselves and the officers they knew. The officers were not supposed to go into their quarters, but Alan had often heard them from the court-yard. It seemed to him that they quarrelled more than the officers. He used to hear voices raised and furious shouting matches, but it never seemed to matter. The officers made more effort to control themselves; he regretted this a little and would have preferred to let off steam.

After a quarter of an hour Treidfeld had counted everybody.

'For Christ's sake, get on with it,' said Fred Martin. 'The man's half-witted. Why doesn't he get one of us to count for him? That's right, start all over again.'

A groan went round. Treidfeld was one short. A group of N.C.O.s scuttled round him and they put their heads together, completely ignoring the prisoners, who might have been pieces of furniture. The British stamped their feet and swung their arms across their bodies.

'It's the French again,' said Bill Franklin. 'Well, what can you expect?'

His grudge against the French dated from his capture on the Somme. He had never been to France before 1940. He had only seen the country at its worst and only remembered the Frenchmen who had surrendered. For a time there had been a very bitter feeling between the British and French, each thinking the others responsible for their captivity. Some of the French even seemed to dislike the British for continuing the war and accused them of leaving France in the lurch from 1933 onwards.

Slowly their relations had got better. They still kept apart,

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living in different parts of the castle, but individuals made friends. Some of the British even learnt French, and some of the French tried to behave like the British. They put on a very off-hand manner and mispronounced English slang. Alan preferred them when they were themselves. Alone among the British, Geoffrey Larkin went through a stage of behaving like a Frenchman. He developed little gestures and said that they were the only civilized people in the castle. After three years together it began to be realized mutually that both had faults and both had virtues. The French learnt about the resistance of London. They admired Churchill. They were pleased about the victories in Africa. The English admitted that a sea frontier is a better defence than a land frontier. Courageous Frenchmen, who had been imprisoned by the Gestapo in their own country, arrived in the castle and told the British how they had saved the lives of R.A.F. pilots, blown up railways, resisted, gone through the nerve-racking ordeal of the lonely underground struggle and prepared the ground for the expected invasion. Slowly, and perhaps not to a great extent, prison drew them together. But Bill Franklin and a few others could not change. To him the French were always the ones who had given in. He made no excuses for it, he listened to no explanations for it. On the whole, he agreed with Treidfeld; the French were 'decadent'.

Another count, and this time Treidfeld had added them up right. Nobody had escaped.

'Parade! dismiss!' shouted the Brigadier.

The prisoners had already broken off. In the middle of conversations, facing in all directions, they clicked their heels mechanically, the sentries left the doorways and they pushed their way up the stairs. The soldiers began to carry containers of soup from the kitchen across the court-yard. On a blackboard was chalked 'Wednesday. Kohl rabbi. Issue of Turkish Cheese at four o'clock'.

It was midday. The next *appel* would be at four o'clock and the last at eight. At nine-thirty the lights would be put out.

Of all Alan's friends in the castle Jim Irving had changed the most, both in appearance and in character. All the prisoners had changed in appearance. Those vertical lines of strain had come between their eyes. Their eyes lacked lustre, their hair had gone dry and in places grey, and most of them had pale and lifeless expressions. Jim's cheeks had fallen in. He had a deep horizontal furrow across his forehead. His hair was still black and vigorous and thick, but he looked tired. He did little now, not even contributing much to the escape. He seemed to be content in organizing the food for Alan's mess. He had become less and less disposed to talk.

He had never been like this before. The dynamo seemed to have fallen out of him. It was difficult to tell if these were passing moods of the prisoners or if there was a permanent change. A short term graph of their mental state would have shown violent fluctuations from extravagant optimism to the nadir of despair. Anyone could tell when they were going through these phases. You could watch them shaking them off. After their dejected periods they seemed to rub their eyes and suddenly come alive again. Underneath, less obvious, were more subtle and more lasting changes; it might be years after their liberation before they themselves or anyone else could say what prison had really meant to them. They used to say that they would enjoy all the ordinary details of life more than they ever had before. They would linger over the slightest pleasures, counting all their blessings. This was the cheerful side. On the obverse was a morose cast of cynicism. Cynicism was the castle's dominant mood. People said that their faith in England, in democracy, in human nature, in their friends, and in themselves had all gone. It was hard to say how sincere they were. They rather liked to be thought hardboiled. The older prisoners had this manner highly developed and the younger, like Tony Masterman, had copied it from them. They were completely sceptical about the peace and it was quite common to hear them talking about the next

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World War. They had been taken in so many times. Not more than one in ten had ever thought that the war could last as long as it had lasted, and now, in order not to be taken in again, they made it a matter of principle never to believe the best. This was perhaps sensible, but it affected them dangerously, because it led many of them no longer to hope for, plan for or think about perfection of any kind. The young men saw no visions, the old men dreamt no dreams. St. Thomas would have appeared gullible beside them. If anyone put forward an optimistic opinion, the answer was usually, 'Yes one would like to believe it . . . it may turn out to be true . . . it's only that experience tells me you're kidding yourself'. They enjoyed disillusioning new prisoners, who arrived full of lighthearted ideas about escaping and the end of the war.

High ideals and optimism, the view, as the saying is, which you see on your right hand, had certainly not died in them, but they kept these springs submerged. In practice, whatever they might say, they had survived their ordeals very well and they were a walking advertisement against their own pessimism. They had a dread of giving way to self-pity. Although sympathy was what they wanted they kept up a front of being self-contained and independent. If someone did someone else a kindness it was common for him to apologize. 'Not at all,' he would say, 'it's no trouble. I was going that way anyhow.' There was an odd perverseness in this attitude. The man who was being kind could not let it be thought that he was so foolish as to put other people's interests before his own; and he had to be careful not to imply weakness in the other. The prisoners seldom talked about their misfortunes. They all had them, but they did not want to be thought soft. So a crust grew round them which it was difficult and troublesome to break. Moments of understanding would suddenly pierce it and then their real feelings were laid bare like a long buried city.

If their characters had been in any way permanently altered, it was either that they had been strengthened by thinking less about themselves or weakened by becoming preoccupied with

themselves. Alan could not say which way he was going. That autumn he was at an instant of suspense and events could swing him either way. He had not lost his initiative, the castle had not yet dominated him. He was escaping in order to escape himself. If he lost the toss and could not go, or if he made the attempt and failed to get outside the walls, then he might become engulfed and stifled in jungles of introspection. He had felt a forest of selfish thoughts sprouting up between him and the world. He would have liked to check them and kill them by talking. Talking would have released his feelings. But friendship was almost impossible in the castle. People became friends for a time and worked off their emotions on one another and then went their ways. If there was no deeper enriching, no real interchange, no interlocking of the roots, then friendship was merely a joining of the top boughs and after a time they sprang apart.

Alan was more extravert than introvert. It had taken three years to start him really worrying about himself, but now this habit was settling upon him. Jim had gone much further. He was approaching that bad period when the prisoners avoided company, stalked round the yard alone with set faces and seemed like people who had locked themselves up and lost the key. In 1940 and 1941 he had been one of the most cheerful of them. He didn't worry about when the war was going to end. He escaped three times and when he was not escaping he was one of the people who said that prison could be thought of as an opportunity. He read books. He wrote a little. He wrote sketches about the other prisoners, wittier and more alive than the laborious drawings Larkin did of them. Once he put on a revue and produced and acted in it. He played Malvolio in a production of *Twelfth Night* and made everybody laugh by taking off a pompous colonel. His own escapes and the others in which he helped usually had something comical and original about them. Once he did an impersonation of a German General and had half of the guard company in a Bavarian camp trembling in front of him. He was a disconcerting man to be outside with, because he took extraordinary risks and treated an

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escape like a holiday tour. Alan had been out with him once, but never again. They were going through Cassel when Jim saw a concert advertised. He insisted on going in. The hall was full of German soldiers. Jim and Alan sat in the gallery and Jim made loud criticisms of the music in fluent German in the intervals.

About eighteen months ago he had begun to alter. Conditions were far better then than they had been in the first days, but his gaiety and sense of humour seemed to have fallen from him. He stopped writing, he took no more interest in escapes and Alan had been glad when he asked if he could join in their new scheme. But he didn't help them as much as he should, and he didn't seem to care whether he went or not. His indifference annoyed Brian and Alan could not understand what had come over him.

After *appel* it was time for midday dinner. Alan's mess sat at a long wooden table in a room with three other messes. Simon Dempster laid the table and was responsible for their crockery and cutlery. Harry Ferguson cut the bread. Jim ran the mess and decided what they were to eat; there was not much choice. Bill Franklin, in an officious fussy way, made the toast and fetched the hot drinks. They could not be certain what Geoffrey Larkin did, but he usually did it late, with disarming apologies. Alan, Tug and Brian were excused duty. There were eight of them in all.

Harry Ferguson was the merriest. He was one of the few prisoners who still looked healthy. He had ginger hair and chubby ruddy cheeks and always seemed to have just come in from a country walk. He was never depressed and everyone knew why not. He had been happily married for seven years, had two children and a buoyant strapping wife who wrote to him three times a week. There were photographs of her all round his bed. He lived for his return home; liberation would be a real climax for him. The prisoners were allowed three letters and four postcards a month. Harry wrote every Sunday. He was very methodical and kept a note of everything he told

his wife, so that he should not repeat himself. He kept her letters in a huge file and read them over and over again.

He cut the German bread into exact slices and slid them along the table. Jim stood at the head, ladling green soup into bowls. The rest stood round, rubbing their hands, staring hungrily at the food.

'Where are the spuds?'

'Geoff's supposed to be fetching them.'

'Supposed to be.'

'That means we shan't get them,' said Bill Franklin. 'I'll go myself.'

He fetched the potatoes and kohl rabbi and divided them equally on to eight plates; there were two potatoes and three spoonfuls of the vegetable each. Jim cut up a round of cheese into eight triangles the size of a thumb and the meal was ready. They talked about the war, about the Germans and about the latest rumour.

When they had repeated everything that had already been said about Colonel Anstruther, Simon Dempster observed:

'They say the camp's going to be moved.'

Brian looked up, munching. Usually he sat dourly silent, thinking of his plans.

'Where did that come from?' he asked.

'Oh, it's going round. I think it started with the French.'

'That rumour usually crops up about this time of the year,' said Tug. 'That and the other story about being taken over by the Gestapo. We'll have that in a few days. Anyone want to bet on it? Bill?'

'It's not worth it. Besides I'm off gambling. The luck's gone dead against me.' He put on an important face. 'One day that rumour's going to come true. Mark my words, boys. One day we're going to wake up and find these nice old gentlemen with their muskets gone and a troop of bloody Nazis in their place. You'll see.' He spoke with relish, as if looking forward to the worst. The worse things were the more he had to grumble about, the bigger his story when he got home.

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'I thought of asking Laharpe to supper one evening,' said Simon Dempster. 'He's very charming and speaks English. Would that be convenient, Jim? I could help to cook. We might make rather a special occasion of it. A sort of farewell before the escape. Would you like to ask anyone, Alan?'

To his own surprise Alan said: 'What about Marcus Litauer?'

'Who?'

'Marcus Litauer.'

'That yid!' exclaimed Bill Franklin incredulously.

'Why not someone new?' asked Alan.

'Do you know him?' asked Simon.

'Slightly.'

'I've got nothing against it,' said Simon, with perfect insincerity. 'I don't care for Jews in crowds. Anything less than three together is all right. What does Litauer talk about?'

'I don't know,' said Alan. 'Anything, I should think. We could ask Morshead too. That's the chap he messes with.'

'What does he do?' asked Bill.

'He's an economist.'

'Good God.'

'It would be a change,' said Alan. 'I'm sick of seeing the same faces.'

Simon looked politely surprised. He was a fastidious young man. Wit, comfort and good manners were happiness to him. His father was one of those influential men of whom the public never hear, who are always going on secret personal missions and introducing important people to one another. In prison, Simon had made a point of sticking to his old ways. He carried on a kind of make-believe that he was still living at home, and when he stretched out his long thin fingers and sprinkled salt in his pea soup, Alan imagined polished tables and dim lights and port. When he spoke to anyone he turned slightly in his chair, graciously, as if at a dinner party. He was the only person in the castle who wore cuff-links and almost the only one who listened to other people's conversation.

YES, FAREWELL

'When are we going to have this party?' asked Harry.

'It depends on the escape,' said Simon. 'When's it coming off?'

They all looked at Brian.

'Brian?'

'What?'

'We're going to have some people to supper,' said Simon patiently. 'When are you going off?' He spoke always with his tongue a little in his cheek, laughing slyly at Brian's earnestness, Bill's pomposity, Alan's awkwardness and his own self-indulgence. Larkin, with his art, was his favourite bait. Somehow Tug and Harry were spared his mockery; Harry was too simple and Tug was his own pillory.

'In about ten days,' Brian answered. 'Don't know yet.'

'Make it a week,' said Tug. 'I'm sick of waiting. Let's get out of this place or get sent to the cells. Whatever we do, let's do it quick.'

Brian compressed his lips. Escaping was not a joke.

The brief meal was nearly ended and all the messes had begun to chatter, lighting cigarettes and clearing dirty plates to the end of tables. On a window sill, looking into the court-yard, sat a very serious-faced officer of about fifty, a major, with thin, grey hair and a little black moustache. Now and then he took a handkerchief out of his pocket, held it to his face, sometimes as long as a minute, and then put it back. He never used the handkerchief. He was signalling with it to another watcher on the opposite side of the court-yard. When he raised it the sentry in the court-yard was out of sight. When he put it back the sentry was in sight. This officer's name was Major Ford. He was a sapper, a live wire, and all the escaping arrangements came under his control.

At the end of the meal Geoffrey Larkin entered, with the air of an abstracted genius, carrying a sheaf of note-books.

'You're late,' said Harry, emphatically. At home Harry had regular meals at regular times, with a red-faced ginger-haired son on one side and a red-faced ginger-haired daughter on the other, eagerly devouring their food. Nothing could be better and he did not see that anyone should want to be different. Still, he

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believed in living and letting live, and one day Geoff was going to be a great painter.

'I'm sorry,' said Geoff. 'My work was going very well and I forgot.'

'That's yours with the plate on top. We've all finished.'

'It was my day to fetch the stuff, too,' said Geoff.

'It was.'

'Hell! Look, I'll do it to-morrow.'

'No. Just do it the days you're supposed to. It's you to fetch supper to-night. Have you got that? Fetch the supper.'

They treated him like an idiot, and he rather liked it. It made him feel exceptional. They made jokes about him and called him 'the Brain', and he accepted it with happy conceit. 'An idea has just come out,' he said. 'I got completely stuck and then suddenly it came out. It often happens like that.'

'I suppose it does,' said Simon, archly. 'Will you be on earth for a little now?'

'Possibly. Possibly.'

'I'm so glad,' said Simon, bending towards him, his cigarette in a holder.

Larkin's air of being apart from them sometimes annoyed them. He was very untidy and quite unscrupulous in small things, which to them, in their crowded quarters, were of importance. He lost his mug several times a week and left his dirty laundry lying on their chairs. He had established his reputation as 'the artist'; trading on it, he mislaid things at leisure, and some kind friend always found them for him.

An orderly came in. His name was Fell. He wore an open shirt with the sleeves rolled up and a belt stitched with the badges of a score of regiments, British and Continental. Tattooed on his right fore-arm was a large woman with a snake twined round her. He hung about behind Simon and then lurched forward.

'Excuse me, sir.'

'Yes?'

'Is there anything fresh about the sports ground, sir? Some of us would like to go down there this afternoon.'

YES, FAREWELL

'No, nothing fresh. The Brigadier saw the Commandant this morning. They won't allow it.'

'Ah.'

Fell shifted his feet. 'No chance of getting down on parole, like?'

'I'm afraid not,' Simon replied.

'Ah. Well, mustn't grumble, I suppose.' He lurched away. Simon clicked his teeth.

'I wish they wouldn't come at mealtimes,' he said. 'Surely they know we're eating.'

'What's this about the sports ground?' asked Harry.

'The Huns have closed it.'

'Why?'

'The Commandant said our conduct was unruly.'

'Christ!' said Bill Franklin. 'It'll be the court-yard next. It's a typical Hun trick.'

'I know,' said Simon, in his voice of studied tolerance, humouring Bill. He was tired of the Germans and tired of talking about them. He had done his escapes and now he had settled down until the war ended. He took imprisonment as a personal insult from a social inferior, to be ignored. He went on, 'The Commandant said a sentry had been pushed off the path. The Brigadier said the path was too narrow, and what about widening it? The Commandant said there was no labour. The Brigadier said we could do it. The Commandant said he couldn't allow that.' Simon introduced the monotony and futility of the interview into his voice.

'Why couldn't he allow it?'

'He couldn't change his orders. He said it would be a sign of weakness. So we came away. That's how it goes. It's always the same.'

And so the conversation went, always the same. They discussed whether all the Germans were to blame for the war, or only a few, and what should be done with them, and who should do it, and nothing new could be added to all they had said for three years past, sitting at deal tables over bowls of pea soup.

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Alan joined in mechanically, but his own opinions did not interest him.

Letters from home were brought in. Nothing for him. His mother wrote to him regularly, but of course she did not know that he was going to escape again. After his previous journeys outside she had tried by subtle warnings and advice to stop him. 'I do think you've played your part in the war,' she said. 'There are so many soldiers here now I really don't think they need you. Still I know you won't listen to anything I say.' Bill Franklin had a letter from his wife; he read it quickly and pushed it in his pocket. Harry had three from Mary Ferguson. She wrote six sheets to a letter, in a round firm generous hand. Alan imagined her to be like her handwriting, round and firm and generous; in her photographs she looked rather like the Queen of England. Harry crouched over her letters like a squirrel, chuckling to himself. They were all about love, their own and other people's. They thought of one another across Europe at fixed hours of the day and night. Weeks ahead they planned that at such and such a moment they would be lying, she on her bed, he on his bunk, in such and such a position, thinking of one another. Geoffrey Larkin also had a letter. He spread it on the table and read it, smiling appreciatively. It was also about love, but of a different kind, more exquisite, more studied. It was part of a prolonged correspondence with an intelligent girl, who sensed in him a noble spirit tortured by imprisonment. Across the war they wrote to one another about the higher planes of life, taking great care with their language. The intelligent girl typed her letters and kept carbon copies of them.

Alan remembered a dream he had had the night before. 'It was very exciting. The whole castle, lit up like a bloody liner, careering about the sky. We'd taken to air. The odd thing was, the real castle was still here, because I looked out of a window when we were in the sky, and I saw it distinctly, sticking up out of the trees. You were there, Harry, and Mary was a sort of air hostess. We were going to found a new world.'

'Did we?' Simon asked.

'No, we just seemed to evaporate.'

'Thank God. I don't think I could bear a new world. We've been through enough already.'

'My dreams aren't at all like that,' said Tug. He lounged back against the wall, his feet protruding the other side of the table. He had an ugly, attractive face and reminded Alan of the Knight in chess. 'I dreamt of my negress the other night, and after that I dreamt about Tony Masterman.'

Alan looked at Geoffrey Larkin. 'Why don't you illustrate my dream?' he asked. 'You could make it something like the Hunting of the Snark?'

'I might,' Geoff said, very off-hand. 'I've finished these spuds. Is there anything else to do?'

About practical details he took the attitude that he could cope with them if necessary, but really thought they should be left to others. He made a point of doing them with a slight flourish, as if it were a triumph of will — look at me, I can be as much on the spot as anyone.

Tug pushed the table back and lifted his clumsy upper half from the bench; his legs appeared to follow independently. He was going to finish the maps. Harry went off to huddle into his mail. Bill Franklin went to play poker. Simon went to play bridge. He had a few select friends; they played strictly according to the rules. Larkin would spend the afternoon at a window, looking for a new view. Brian was talking secretly to Major Ford, who answered still looking into the court-yard, raising and letting fall his handkerchief. Alan started to scrub the table down and Jim Irving stood at the end, squeezing the spuds into a mash. His fingers worked into the white pulp like a machine. His manner was abstracted, day-dreaming. He seemed to run off two quite different currents; you couldn't even guess what was going on in his head.

'Curious,' he said. 'I had a dream like yours. Only in mine the castle became a ship and we went away by sea. We were going to look for Eldorado.'

'Did we find it?'

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'No. We came back after we got half-way.'

'I'm surprised we ever started,' said Alan. 'I don't know if I shall ever be able to do anything on my own again.' He squeezed out the cloth, dried the plates, and put the chairs against the table. 'We ought to toss,' he said. 'Is it going to be you, or me?' Jim didn't answer him. He was in the mood where nothing seemed to matter. There was no hurry even for the escape. The room was emptying. Major Ford and Brian had left and shouts came up to them from the court-yard, where twelve of the prisoners were playing basket-ball. Two German soldiers entered and clumped round, peering behind the cupboards, poking into corners, feeling the bars. They hung about by the table, staring at the English food and the biscuits Jim was grinding into pastry.

'Cooking?' said one of them.

'Yes.'

They stood there for several minutes staring. They had an attitude of always expecting something which they never got. Alan went on drying the plates. Neither he nor Jim paid any attention to them.

'Ja,' said one of them and sighed. They moved away. Their boots thumped along the passage.

'Shall we toss, Jim?' said Alan.

'Now?'

'Might as well. Brian wants to know which of us it is.'

'Wait until this evening.'

'All right.'

Alan wished he could get Jim to do something. He wished he could come to decisions himself. It was a constant effort to keep on the initiative. He was glad of people like Brian, who kept him up to the mark and gave him orders.

Alan left Jim and joined Brian and Major Ford in Ford's room on the other side of the court-yard. They were poring over Brian's documents of the escape and scarcely noticed him. Brian was explaining. Ford had a mysterious confidential air and people kept on putting their heads round the door with conspiratorial messages for him. Brian was saying, 'We get into the

window of the guard-room by the rope. We've practised it for a week and it won't take more than a minute. As soon as Alan's in he fastens a strip of camouflage in the pane to look like the broken window. It'll look all right from the yard.'

'What happens if the window's wired?'

'Sound detectors?'

'Yes.'

'It's unlikely,' said Brian. 'If it is, the scheme's off. That's all there is to it. The room inside is a disused attic. We've got a master key made. It may be padlocked on the other side, so we'll take tools for forcing out a panel. It's a panelled door.'

'How do you know?'

'I've seen it through the window with the telescope . . .' He went on explaining, balancing risks, going minutely into details. Here is the great staff officer or administrator, Alan thought. Brian was all his job. Alan understood the bitterness imprisonment had furrowed into him. Brian knew his own powers. He could have made a great career in the war. How difficult it would have been to work under him, what tact would have to be used; yet you would always know that nothing had been forgotten, and if you failed it would be bad luck or your own fault. Alan listened to the two of them as they stepped backward and forward across the plan. Ford was trying to find holes in it. He admired Brian's thoroughness, but unwillingly. People always stiffened against Brian's manner; they disliked the feeling he gave them, that everything had been thought of by him and that they were only there to accept.

Ford posted a guard outside the door and the three of them moved into an inside room. This was the escapers' chief workshop. Two officers were busy on keys and crowbars and Tug was crouching at a desk under the window, copying their route maps. Brian went to the hide in the wall and took out their civilian suits. He and Tug and Alan changed out of uniform. It was an odd sensation, getting into civvies and looking at one another. It brought peace back with a rush.

'Shove the hats on,' Brian said.

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They pulled the soft brims over their eyes and grinned. The hats were made from Australian wideawakes, with a feather in the band, Bavarian fashion. They wore neat blue suits and white collars. Brian walked critically round them. 'We'll have to have raincoats, of course,' he said.

'You're telling me,' said Tug. 'It's going to be bloody cold.'

'Alan looks all right,' said Brian. 'The moustache will have to go.'

'Not till the last moment,' said Alan. 'It's like English soil.' Alan was tall and pale and without the moustache he thought he looked silly; but it would have to come off.

'You don't want decent shoes,' Brian said. 'It's a certain give-away. Get a pair of cheap shoes like the ones the Huns wear.' He pulled at the suits, looking at the dye and the joins in the seams. Tug's was the least plausible, but all new clothes looked incongruous on him.

'The maps are ready,' Tug said. He had done them slapdash, with bold rather than accurate lines, showing the rivers, roads and railways on the way to Switzerland. Brian grunted and Tug blundered in with prepared excuses. 'I haven't put in every ruddy little stream. There's no point and it would take days.'

'You've marked all the railways the same,' said Brian. 'We need to distinguish the gauges.'

'Do you want me to do the whole lot again?'

'The paths ought to be filled in more clearly.' An awkward moment followed. They felt Brian's quills going out against them. 'Are we expecting to do much walking?' Tug asked, fidgeting. 'I thought, you said, in these clothes . . .'

'You can't tell beforehand. We might have to and we might not. We've got to be prepared. Aren't you expecting to walk?'

'I don't mind a damn. It's as you say.'

They were going to escape together, but they didn't fit into one another. Brian was the sharp corner. Tug was much easier. Tug didn't involve his dignity in these half-arguments; he didn't mind being led, provided it was done sensibly and quietly. His resentments died young. Brian's matured. They were always

yielding to him. Neither of them minded, when it was because of his efficiency and hard work, but sometimes it was because he became offended and they had to placate him.

They spent the rest of the afternoon practising the climb into the guard-room window. They'd made a kind of model in one of the high attics. Brian uncoiled a blue and white rope, plaited out of bed-linen, and chucked it up into the darkness of the rafters. It caught across a beam. Ford held the end and the three of them went up, Alan first, then Tug, like an eel, with long pulls, and Brian last, rapid and compact. 'Forty-five seconds,' said Ford.

'About right.'

They sat like owls on the beam, and through a window they could see the white thinness of the river, ruffled by a breeze, with a punt pushing across the ripples; beyond, encroaching to the banks, were dark woods, and beyond the woods a blur of hills. The hills dipped as if they were swinging open and beyond were more valleys and more hills and, far far away, the frontier.

Mechanically the day revolved, like all the other days. The games of bridge and poker came to an end. Automatically the prisoners turned up on the afternoon roll call and went through the same ceremony. They crowded round the stoves and made toast, and in the evening there was a play. The theatre was on the top floor. It had a proper stage, above which had been affixed the royal arms of England. Busts of famous Germans, Shakespeare included with them, stood in niches under the ceiling. The prisoners carried chairs and rugs up a narrow staircase and entered to find the hall decorated with strips of coloured paper and the band playing. A Frenchman played the piano, two Czechs the violins, and the English took the saxaphones, double bass and trumpets. If it was classical music, a Frenchman conducted; if swing or jazz, an Englishman. Sometimes the band got into difficulties, but the two Czechs were professionals and kept things going on the violins until it had sorted itself out. Tug Wilson played the trumpet.

The hall filled and darkened. Alan stood at the back, excited

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by the murmur before the curtain rose; he liked the movement of heads in rows. As the stage lights went up, the music ceased, the applause broke off and all craned forward. What they saw was the interior of a country club in England. The lounge bar consisted of packing cases and all the costumes were made of paper. Everyone applauded. It was a friendly, uncritical audience. The play began. A maid entered with a tray, followed by another maid, who drew the curtains. They had a conversation about the characters who were to appear next, explaining what the audience was to expect. The audience took this in, the maids withdrew, and the characters appeared and behaved as the maids had said they would. The audience sat poised for jokes and when they encountered one laughed enthusiastically. Cat calls and love calls greeted the entrance of Tony Masterman, who had been coaxed into playing the heroine. At first he moved stiffly, grinning at the audience, and self-consciously smoothing his skirt over his knees when he sat down. Gradually he slipped into the part. His movements became consciously feminine. Many eyes followed him. He seemed to know that he had some power over the prisoners and Alan thought he was beginning to enjoy it.

The play was a comedy, of the kind that erupts in scores on the London stage and runs for years. A stereotyped father and a stereotyped mother had come on their holidays with a son who wanted to paint and a daughter who wanted love. They had a few rows and walked out on one another. The son was rather a prig and talked to the sister, who believed in his genius, about the searing conflict between art and convention. Gradually humour and dramatic situations wafted the prisoners away. In the front row the bullet head and wrinkled neck of Captain Treidfeld squatted on a pair of broad shoulders that shook at intervals. He laughed uproariously at anything noisy or slapstick or vulgar, and watched the female impersonators with admiration. The play unsettled Alan. It had been written as comedy but it had become satire. In unintentional nudity it exposed how meagre was the free life to which all of them were looking forward. The

trite and pointless talk was too like the talk to which he contributed every day amongst his friends. After the first act he went out and walked for a little round the deserted court-yard.

The dark clouds were driving in waves over the deeper stillness of the night sky, with the stars riding among them like sea-gulls, the Pleiades in the centre; and he felt sure, watching the rapid heaving swell of the clouds, that the castle was moving. Laughter burst from the windows of the theatre. Without knowing it the audience were laughing at themselves. Something had happened to prevent him joining in. A new person had come into him and was standing beside the old, analysing, nudging, at times contemptuous; his communication with people and events was no longer direct, but always through this new person, and he felt that his spontaneity had gone.

He did not go back to the play. He wandered round the castle and found himself in one of the big dining-rooms. Peter Wade and Fred Martin were sitting round the stove. They shoved pieces of cardboard in and occasionally the flames flared up, lighting their crouched shapes. Their voices were tired and plaintive. They had just heard that Colonel Anstruther would be leaving for Poland to-morrow, and they were venting their feelings on him.

'It's a damned disgrace,' said Peter Wade for the twentieth time. 'He ought to be court martialled when he gets home.'

'The Brigadier let him go.'

'Court martial the Brigadier then.'

He was like the Duchess in *Alice in Wonderland*. He wanted to court martial everybody.

When they had no more to say there was a long silence, and Alan could hear the creaking of their chairs. At last Peter Wade heaved himself towards his bunk.

'Oh Christ!' he said. 'How long is this bloody war going to last?'

They had nothing to do. They could not think of anything to do. They were used to ships and aeroplanes and engines, and Alan felt sorry for them. Their whining voices got on his nerves, but he felt more sorry for them than for other prisoners with richer mental resources.

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He went up to the turret-room where he slept. Jim Irving was sitting there playing the 'Emperor' Concerto of Beethoven. Alan felt quite flat, like a desert with the great chords stampeding over it. The music plunged into him, like an explosive charge into a pool, and threw his dead feelings to the surface. When it was over, both of them sat silent and preoccupied. Then Alan said:

'That sound-box is better. Harry had a look at it.'

'I'm getting used to it now. I wish there were a radiogram though. There's still that tinny noise.'

Alan lay on his bunk smoking, his arms behind his head. Jim had a book propped up at the table. Music, books, the theatre, these were the sedatives or the stimulants. The mill wheel rustled far below, a rustle like the scythe of time. Enormous beams from the arc-lamps, flung against the castle walls, snatched it out of the darkness and made it seem to float; miles along the valley people saw it and exclaimed, thinking it fairylike, aërial, shining, unlike itself.

He looked at Jim. Jim had a book, but he was not reading. Not once did he turn a page. His head was sunk, he passed the points of his fingers across his forehead and closed his eyes. Alan took out a book himself and glanced at it vaguely.

'What are you thinking about?' Jim said. 'You haven't turned a page for five minutes.'

Alan laughed.

'I was going to say the same of you.'

'Oh, I was dozing. What was the play like?'

'I didn't care for it. It seemed to be going very well.'

'Why don't you go back?' asked Jim.

'Oh, I don't know.'

After a while Jim said:

'You remember you told us about that dream. That dream that the whole castle took to air. Do you dream much?'

'It depends. On the whole, no. Lately I've dreamt more than usual.'

'What sort of things?'

'Rather dull generally. I had quite a number about escaping.'

'Oh,' said Jim, in a disappointed voice.

'Why?' asked Alan. 'Do you dream much?'

'Off and on.'

'Interesting?'

'Some rather nightmarish.'

'I'd like to read old Litauer's dream book,' said Alan.

'What book's that?'

'He keeps a record of our dreams. Didn't you know that? Any he can get us to tell him. I'd like to have a look at it. I suppose he wouldn't let it out of his sight. It would give away a lot of things about people, if they told him honestly. You should tell him yours.'

'Does he interpret them?' Jim asked.

'I don't know. He's rather cagey about it. You should talk to him, Jim. I think he's very intelligent.'

Jim did not answer. He closed up. He had a manner like a safety curtain let down very fast, when he did not want to speak to people.

Tug came in. He was in very good spirits after the play.

'You are a couple of gloomy birds,' he said. 'Why didn't you come to the play?'

'I saw the first act,' said Alan.

'What was wrong with it? Christ! You're becoming so critical. You're both getting as surly as Brian. It was bloody funny. And as for Tony Masterman! . . .' He flung out a hand, with the points of the thumb and second finger together and jerked his head up. '*Prima!*' he exclaimed (it was a word they had learnt from the Germans), 'all my worst instincts were roused.'

'Did you make a date?' Alan asked.

'Couldn't get near him. The stage door was besieged. I shall send him a slab of chocolate. Honestly, you should have stayed, Alan.'

'I might go to-morrow night.'

'I'm certainly going again. You come too, Jim. Stuck up here by yourself all day. It's not healthy.'

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He sat in his bunk, fingering his carved woman between his big hands. He looked at them both and shook his head.

After the last parade all the lights in the castle were put out and they went to bed. They took down the blackout so that the arc lamps outside shone in, casting a criss-cross reflection of barred windows on the ceiling. The court-yard was a black well, with one white lamp flowering above the clock. The green-coated sentry patrolled with his black dog. And so the day ended, though not for Alan; he still had to relieve Brian and do his mid-night watch. Nor did it end in earnest for any of them, for at night they were private and had their memories. Bill was not gambling to-night. In Alan's room the four of them, all undressed except Alan, lit cigarettes and lay on their bunks, thinking like the whole world of things they were without. Their entire being was narrowed to pin-heads of ash smouldering into the darkness. What a beginning for a film! A camera would swing across the battlefields, across the bombed cities, along the hills, into this quiet river valley in the heart of Europe, catching the brilliant hulk of the derelict castle in one long held shot, and then dip inside, among the prisoners with their dreams; and so a story would begin.

IV

ALAN lay on his bed and the evening desire began, like the morning desire, but less strong. The pit of his stomach seemed to have been drained, with nothing left but an empty ache. Sometimes it continued for days like that. It was his assurance, his hold on life; it was like a wound of which a man suddenly becomes aware after having thought himself paralysed.

He projected this physical craving into some future time when it would be satisfied. But he did not yet feel confident enough to face the future by himself. He dared only to think of things that had happened before. There was much of this kind of cowardice

in the castle, this hoping that everything would in every way be the same again. The well-to-do hoped that they would still be well-to-do. The husbands hoped that their wives would not have changed. Many people were without intrinsic strength. Alan knew of this weakness in him and wanted to be rid of it. To escape was a vague move against it.

But he still thought of home and of the past. The long steep valleys and the rocky hills, like lions, crouching above the lakes. The house was in a valley, but the hills jumped up steeply behind. Rocks jutted through the moss and bracken, and a few thin trees stood about like hair standing on end on a skull. In winter the snow torrents hurtled down their crevices into the valley, flooding the stream that ran along its bed and past the house. Most of the year the rainclouds were never far off, balanced in huge grey shapes like boulders on the summits, billowing down to the house, with sheets of rain slanting underneath, hiding everything. The hills were his environment. All his boyhood he had had this sense of being commanded and of having to get away from and rise above something. The hills, with their famous rock-climbs where the tourists came in summer only, drew him up to them; and as soon as he was at the foot of a climb, whatever the weather, he had to put his hands in the first holds; and as soon as he had done that he had to reach the top.

At night he was drawn to them. One night he even thought of climbing. It was in summer, during one of the few hot clear spells. The inns were full of tourists, covering the rock-face like ants in daytime, and leaving marks where their climbing boots had scraped. The marks made a white trail which could be seen far below. At night the tourists went to bed early or sat in the bars, comparing and boasting of the ways they had gone up, and often he joined them, boasting too, while pretending to give them expert advice.

One night he sat at the end of the table opposite his mother, in the little dining-room, with the maid bringing in the food and the curtains drawn. His mother was looking at him covertly, during the silences, thinking of him all the time, so that his

thoughts were always aware of her and unable to slip clear, a ship tugging at its moorings.

'I think I'll go for a walk,' he said.

'In the garden? I'll come too. Wait for me to get my coat and I'll come with you.'

'I meant a long walk. I've not taken any exercise all day.'

'A long walk? At this time of night?'

'Yes. Don't wait up for me.'

'I'll put the key under the mat. Don't forget to lock up. And give me a cigarette, dear, before you go.'

He lit the cigarette for her, and left her sitting there with her pale face under the lights, a middle-aged Mariana in the Moated Grange. She belonged to the period of large monumental women. Her loose grey hair was tied in a bun at the back and when she took off her hat the strands were disarranged. She was capable and sensitive and gave an impression of being able to manage for herself and others. Neighbours did not like her, because she thought herself better than they were, not socially, but more intelligent. Before her marriage she had been a blue-stocking and her husband had not lived long enough for her to become a housewife; so that she had been left with confused yearnings, a sense of isolation, and a concealed jealousy for contented marriages.

Alan walked briskly for a mile along the road skirting the stream, until the road stopped at the last farm-house. He crossed the stream and struck uphill, on to the fells using the stones of the dried-up torrent as a staircase. He reached a broad saddle between two bastions of rock and went on beside a shrivelled lake, high above the road and the villages, a pass between two populated valleys. After two miles it began to descend and he saw the moon shining on a wide lonely stretch of water below and whitening the roofs of farm-houses. He stopped under the shadow of the rocks, wondering if he dared attempt a climb. He swung himself on to the first stance and began feeling for the holds. But he thought better of it and went up the easy way, up the scree, clattering among the loose stones.

He lay for a long while on the top, on a little plateau of rough grass, warm with the exercise. There was a very famous rock near-by, called the Camel, a huge slab shaped like a hump, where people carved their names. He could see it silhouetted, more like a tortoise than a camel. At its base was a horizontal crevice, between it and the mass of rock beneath, just wide enough for a man to lie inside. He took off his clothes and lay there in the dry rock, face downwards like someone buried. The consciousness of time ebbed. The earth turned and his heart beat among the rocks. He closed his eyes and the coldness melted under the warmth of his body. Darkness enveloped him but he had no morbid relish of death, when this was the position for ever. Death meant nothing to him then. He was large and young and vigorous and had never been in love. He lay among the rocks, on a level it seemed with the stars, and his heart was throbbing like a spring. Afterwards, without dressing, he sat on top of the hump, on the edge of the world, gazing at the lake that filled the valley and the moonlight settling like doves on the roofs of farms. He walked home very cheerful, very come-what-may. The light in his mother's room was still burning. Sometimes she sat up all night, smoking and reading, but really waiting for him to come home. She had left cake and whisky in the sitting-room. When he had made a good job of both, he went quietly up the narrow stairs, but it was no good trying not to be heard. A stair creaked, a light shone under her door, and the soft voice called out, as if still speaking to a child:

'Al-an!

She liked him to sit on her bed, where she lay with a book, wearing tortoiseshell spectacles. Usually he enjoyed it. He had done it since he was a boy. But when she stayed up until the early morning, it annoyed him, and she had become alive to this. She had become aware that he was of age and could no longer be held to her by the child-love and the child-admiration. She had to come off her pedestal and mingle with him on a different plane. She hoped now that they could be as friend to friend, sharing similar tastes, independent yet joined by a common way

of looking at things and people. She liked him to believe that he and she were in some way different from the Merediths and the Fanshawes and the Curtises and other families in the neighbourhood; they two had more discrimination, greater sensibility, and so they must be bound to keep together out of self-appreciation and self-defence. She was well read, sang and played the piano and was witty in a way that slightly disconcerted people, and in youth she had travelled every year.

She made no spoken claims on him now. She substituted a maze of subtle unspoken obligations, by which he felt himself bound out of gratitude and decency. He was free to do as he pleased. He was to invite and entertain his own friends; if they found her good company, and they always did, she was ready to be there, but she did not want to be in the way. She would even go off for a few days and leave him the run of the house. She saw that he met the daughters of the neighbours, but she contrived to disparage them. He deserved something better. . . .

'Margaret Curtis is pretty, isn't she? Such a lovely complexion. But she's rather dull, to me anyhow. Girls nowadays seem to have no conversation. . . .'

She was always right. Alan agreed with her.

'She's like most of the girls round here,' he said. 'I wish we could go to London occasionally.'

'I don't know if you'll find better conversation there, dear. More talk, perhaps, but I prefer the country girls. Still, we'll make an expedition. A forage party. It's years since I spent any time in London. We'll go to an hotel and do a round of the theatres. As soon as you have your next holidays.'

He worked at the estate auctioneer's in the local town. There was an opening waiting for him, which he would be able to fill in a few years, and it might lead to a job in London. His mother had arranged it for him by influence. The town was six miles from home and he went in each day on his motor bike. Somehow these plans of going to London always seemed to come when the holidays were a long way off; and as they approached the plans were forgotten.

YES, FAREWELL

One day, of course, he would marry. Thirty was a sensible age, she said, thirty at the earliest, unless he found the perfect woman before. She had been nineteen and his father twenty-four, when they married.

'Who knows?' she smiled. 'I may marry before you do. After all, I'm not forty-five yet. Mrs. Meredith was fifty when she married again, and I'm not nearly such an old hag as she is. Now what about finding a nice husband for me?'

'You know you could do it better than I could.'

'We might have a bargain, dear. Wouldn't a joint wedding be a joke? Mother and son on the same day. It sounds quite shocking.'

They went to church regularly every Sunday. Lately she had been toying with the Roman Catholic Church. She liked the bells and images and incense and the misty enveloping assurances, although she neared it with her eyes open and made jokes about her possible conversion. The priest came often to meals, and she and he had long discussions. She had an impulse towards the transcendental, like many who are not satisfied by marriage nor by work, and her vanity was touched when she thought of the mighty organization behind the spare little priest, and the hundreds of thousands of other priests, and the Cardinals and the Pope himself, and the centuries of power and propaganda, all active for the possession of her single soul. She coquetted as with a lover. Alan looked on at the flirtation and was shocked and roused violently.

'I hate it,' he said. 'How can you surrender like that to having everything decided and dictated to you? It's not right.'

'You don't understand, my dear. We have to be obedient to something, don't we?' She quoted Rochefoucauld. 'You know how profound his sayings are and he says: "Everyone feels the desire to abase himself before something. Abase yourself before God; it is always the least humiliating." Father Richmond reminded me of that the other day. He is a very well read man. I quite enjoy our little talks, apart from the religious side.'

THE CASTLE

'Can't you have the talks without anything else? You don't have to let him fasten his claws on you.'

'Oh, my dear, I assure you I'm not letting him do that. I use my reason. But the arguments are very strong. I wish you'd come and join in one day.'

'No, thanks.'

'It would be quite exciting.'

'I'd rather not be there. Honestly, I don't like seeing him in the house.'

'You know, Alan, you're very like your father sometimes. He was a proper covenanting Presbyterian.' She pronounced the word jokingly with a mock Scots accent. 'He really believed that the Church of Rome was the scarlet woman. I wouldn't have dared talk about it to him.'

Suddenly Alan let fly.

'Well, don't talk about it to me. I *hate* it. It's unnatural.'

'Alan!'

She gaped at him in astonishment. His anger surprised him himself. It gave him pleasure to see her caught like that off her guard, gaping at him. Something sleeping had been awakened, which had nothing to do with the Pope in Rome; the conflict between his own growing self and the self she had created for him. She took the warning. The priest came less often. Later she told him casually that she had decided to stay Protestant.

This was another of the concessions by which she showed her devotion to him and bound him to her. She yielded on so many points, and above all she never mentioned it, so that a network of countless invisible little obligations was woven over the strand of natural love, weighing on it and threatening it. There was, on both sides, real love, real understanding. What Alan understood in her best was the weakness she never owned to openly, the terror of being left alone. She knew what this would mean for her. She could seem strong and independent, with her brains and her small income, but only as long as she had a man to hold between her and the world. Alone, her brains would be her downfall. Those whom she had treated with carefully restrained

superciliousness would take a delight in snubbing her. She would be a clever woman with no friends, the kind for the fools to hound. He knew this, without having to take it to pieces and analyse it. It was only when he became a prisoner that he had time and inclination to do that, and had grown up sufficiently to stand back.

Ten miles from their home lived Mrs. Willoughby Howarth. Mrs. Howarth had an influence on him, very different from his mother's. She was far more unpopular than Mrs. Maclaren, whom she resembled in character but not in appearance. She was wealthy, eccentric, and had once been known in London society. She had expropriated two husbands without compensation and now lived childless and alone in a large house on the edge of wild country. No one knew why she had come to the neighbourhood, unless it was to shake off the police. Her originality and candour were something new to Alan. He often rode over to call on her and have a drink. His mother showed rather a barbed tolerance.

'I can't stand the woman myself,' she said. 'Still, if she amuses you ...'

'She's very generous. I don't see anything wrong with her. She doesn't belong here, but nor do we really.'

'My dear, she's an old shark. She likes you, because you're young and easy to impress. Don't you get taken in, that's all I ask. I've seen scores of women like that, riding about in big cars and propping up gambling clubs. It's not difficult to be generous, if you've got the money.'

'I think she'd be generous anyhow.'

'In youth I understand that she was,' said Mrs. Maclaren darkly.

Similar conversations took place on the other side. Mrs. Howarth was more careful in what she said, Mrs. Maclaren being Alan's mother. She made sly digs at his cloistered upbringing.

'So here you are again. Will you have a cocktail? Or aren't you allowed cocktails? I know your mother disapproves of me. So does everyone. I'm a bad woman.'

THE CASTLE

She sat among green and orange cushions on a white sofa, drinking cocktails and eating chains of chocolates. She was very heavily built, with a jowlish face, once lifted, twice fallen, the lower part recalling a landslide. Her hair was dyed grey-blue. The neighbours called her the Sultana and although they thought little of her they attended her parties. She 'entertained lavishly' and liked to collect the young and innocent round her. She mixed them up with fashionable friends from London and sometimes they went away less innocent. It was at her house that Alan first met Jeanne.

'I'm a bad influence, Alan, am I not? I bet your mother's told you that. Hasn't she?'

'She doesn't mind me coming here. I don't think she pays much attention.'

'Oh, nonsense. She hates it. Of course she does. Now, tell me all the news. Who are you in love with?'

'No one.'

'Well, you ought to be. There's going to be a war and it's time you had some experience. Margaret Curtis is a nice girl. She was talking about you the other day.'

'What did she say?'

'You'd like to know, wouldn't you?' She winked and nudged him. 'Don't worry. It was quite flattering.'

'I've known her for years.'

'Why don't you do something about it then? She's the best around here at present.'

'I don't want to get married yet.'

'Married! Come on, Alan, have another drink. You know, you're going to grow up into a first-class prig if you're not careful. And I should be sorry to see that, because you could be quite attractive. And what's this about your mother turning Roman Catholic?'

'Who told you that?'

'My dear, it's all round the place. I hear you had a terrible row with her. What does this priest keep calling on her for, unless . . . ?'

She looked at him slyly, and he did not know whether to be shocked or not.

'You tell your mother from me,' said Mrs. Willoughby Howarth, 'that the best thing for her is to get married again quick. I know plenty of men'd go for her. She's good-looking still, if only she'd do her hair decently. Tell her to get rid of that bun at the back of her neck and she can have a husband any day. You tell her that from me.'

'All right, I'll tell her. And I'll bring back the answer.'

'What would the answer be?'

'Mind your own business, I should think,' he said agreeably.

'Well, I'm used to being told that. Have another drink, and listen while I tell you about the dance I'm going to give. Jeanne is coming, so you must come. She asked who you were last time.'

'Jeanne who?'

'Now don't be pompous. You know perfectly well. You couldn't take your eyes off her. You're very lucky to be even noticed.'

She lolled back, her stomach bulging in a long shapeless dress held in by an orange sash.

Her house was as extraordinary as her appearance. Outside it was the colour of rain, built on the edge of the fells. The inside was a mix-up of all kinds of styles. It looked like a furniture dealer's converted into a home.

'Bedlam,' said Mrs. Maclaren, who had been there once. 'It wouldn't surprise me to find it was all for sale.'

The chief living-room ran the whole length of one side. The walls and furniture were white, with garish colours in the cushions and curtains and ornaments. The rain beat on the tall windows and the rough skyline of the hills was like a battlement. On the mantelpiece two negro statuettes, which had come from Italy, held lights. A stuffed parrot, with uncut stones for eyes, perched on the piano. An angular modern sculpture faced a group of Dresden shepherdesses. Masks and scimitars hung on the walls. People liked this mess of colour in its white setting, yet it annoyed them because it got away with it and they felt

THE CASTLE

that it should not. Very incongruously, but deliberately, there was a Dickensian fireplace, with two Yuletide logs permanently laid. She also had several sporting prints, though she had never held a gun or been on a horse in her life, and two prints of 'Cries of Old London'. These English decorations were part of an elaborate joke aimed at English life in general. Everything in the room was odd, and so the squires in their pink coats, and the logs laid crosswise as if in an old inn parlour, looked odd too. She had a bookcase of banned books with disguised covers, which Alan read when Mrs. Howarth was not at home, arriving early on purpose. The piano was seldom played, unless one of her guests from London played it. Mrs. Maclaren made a point of opening it and striking a few chords.

'It's out of tune,' she said. 'There's quite a good tuner in the village.'

And she flicked some dust off it with her finger.

Mrs. Willoughby Howarth gave her dance in midsummer, during the hot spell. Mrs. Maclaren declined.

'Why not come, mother?' he said. 'It's sure to be good. You'll enjoy it.'

'I'm sure it'll be good. You know I don't like her, so it would be dishonest to take her hospitality. You go and have a good time. Besides, I don't dance.'

'Nor can I.'

'You can dance very well, if you put your mind to it. There'll be plenty of attractive women there. You go and enjoy yourself.'

She would have liked to go, because parties of that kind were after her heart, but she did not like it that another woman was the hostess, and she did not want to watch her son in the middle of another world. So he went alone, not sorry. He looked forward with trepidation to seeing Jeanne again.

He rode over on his motor bike, in his evening clothes, with clips round his trouser legs. Coming out of a wood in the summer evening he saw the house with all the windows lighted, in front of the austere hills, like a private yacht moored in a rocky cove. Strips of light chequered the lawn in front. He began to

feel excited; but when he was inside among the chattering strangers, his shyness swept over him and he made for Mrs. Meredith and the refuge of local gossip. Mrs. Howarth pulled him away.

'Now, Alan, everyone is longing to meet you. I've told them all about you.'

There was to be a dinner party for the special guests before the dance. She had had several cocktails already and was very merry, certain that the party would be a great success. She wore a gold dress, with the usual sash to hold her in, and a gold turban wound tightly round her head, and she was very much made-up.

'This is Alan Maclaren,' she announced. 'Everybody, Alan Maclaren. Alan Maclaren, everybody.' Then in a hoarse whisper, meant to be an aside, 'Jeanne's here, you know.' She introduced him to somebody, as if she were selling him. 'He's a famous mountaineer. He'll climb anything, anywhere.'

She had made climbing his *thing*. All her friends had to have a *thing*, a story attached to them, to show that they were different from ordinary people and attractive. Climbing was to be his for the evening. He felt a perfect fool, being handed from one to another like a dummy, and wished he could go away. They all started asking questions about climbing, the women pretending to be deeply interested and putting on a serious look.

'And do you *really* use all those ropes? It looks so terrifying. I saw a film of it, and I could hardly bear to watch.'

He reacted against their world. He knew nothing at all about it, but he believed that it was false, however much it glittered, and that to adapt himself was to be drawn in and dangerous. He wanted to keep apart from them. They sensed this and it attracted them all the more. They saw him either as a prude to be shocked and laughed at, or as an innocent to be seduced, or as a strong silent country lad, according to their imaginations. Mrs. Howarth, according to hers, had prepared them for him.

'Now we're all here,' she cried. 'All except Jeanne, as usual. Tell her to hurry up, somebody, or we'll all be tipsy before we start.'

THE CASTLE

'Jeanne's always late,' a woman said to Alan, 'I can't think why. She doesn't need to do anything to herself. Unlike me. It takes me years to make myself even *presentable*.'

'Who is Jeanne?' he asked, hoping to hear a character sketch of her, and talking quietly so that Mrs. Howarth should not hear the pretence.

'Who is *Jeanne*? Do you mean to tell me you've never heard of Jeanne Aumont? I thought everyone had heard of her. . . .'

'Ought I to have?'

'Well . . . of course, living right away here . . .'

'So here you are,' Mrs. Howarth exclaimed, clapping her hands, and everyone stopped talking and looked towards the door with rapture, admiration, envy. And here Alan's story really began, though he remembered nothing more than the entry of a young woman, slender and deeply sunburnt, with dark hair in a fringe on her forehead, and a white dress open at the collar like a cricket shirt. It was her colour, almost bronze, that had made him stare the first time. Now, against the white dress, it was flagrant. She took his breath away and he stood behind the other people so that he could look at her.

They dined on a terrace, with the smell of the roses coming up to them from the garden and more roses in white bowls on the table.

'Such a good idea,' said Mrs. Howarth. 'It clears my head to be out of doors. What luck! I'd have bet anything it would rain. It always does here.'

She sat at the head, flushed and extravagant, with her gold turban and her bloodhound cheeks, like portrayals of the Emperor Nero. The conversation started before they were all seated and cascaded on without a pause. They talked about nothing, occasionally bringing Alan in. They were like parakeets and birds of paradise and their words flew off them like coloured feathers. He couldn't understand half of it. Each phrase had an innuendo. They jumped stages of thought and left him far behind; so he made polite replies and concentrated on the food and drink, with an occasional look at Jeanne. She spoke less than

the rest. When she did the others checked to listen to her, and Mrs. Howarth glanced at her with unusual deference, with a shade of covetousness.

'Who is that woman in white?' asked old Mrs. Meredith.

'She's French, I think. Jeanne something.'

'Very arresting. Wonder where she's been to get that colour. You'd never get it up here, not in a month of Sundays.'

'Is it real? I thought it might be make-up.'

'Make-up? My dear boy. Look at her hands, look at her . . . well, just look at her. She must have been sunbathing for weeks.'

'Your husband's having a success with her.'

'Old flirt. Still, it does him good.'

The Merediths were widower and widow remarried, both of them over fifty. They were interested chiefly in dogs, which Mr. Meredith talked about in a loud voice to all and sundry. He was talking about them now, with some elephantine ogling and arch looks towards his wife. Jeanne sat erect, her round small head slightly turned, listening gravely. There were small dark curls at the back of her neck, and Alan felt an itch to touch them. He looked at her as Mrs. Meredith had suggested, and the itch increased.

The band arrived for the dance and began to tune up indoors. A small parquet strip had been laid by the stream at the bottom of the slope, with Chinese lanterns hung round it, and a fiddler had been hired to play there.

'I had all kinds of ideas,' said Mrs. Willoughby Howarth. 'I wanted to have all the village here, and revive all kinds of old customs, like roasting oxen and country dances and bear-baiting. I tried everywhere to get a bear. It would have been such a success. Have you ever seen any bear-baiting, Jeanne?'

'Bear-baiting? Never. Plenty of bull-fights. That was exciting.'

'In Spain?' said Mr. Meredith.

'In Spain, but also in the south of France. We have them there, too.'

'In the south of France, eh? I thought that was nothing but casinos.'

THE CASTLE

'Not all of it. You should come and see the different part.'

'Bull-fights are cruel. Damned cruel. Not my idea of excitement.'

'How is it crueller than your fox-hunting? I don't understand that, now. That is your idea of excitement.'

They began to tease Mr. Meredith. Mrs. Howarth had asked them to tease him. He was an old English custom, to be set off against her cosmo-metropolitan friends and laughed at a little; just as she had sporting prints on the walls and talked about bear-baiting and country dancing.

'Do you live in the south?' he asked Jeanne.

'Oh, yes, always. I come to England a little in the summer to see friends. Never at any other time. It is so grey.'

'Ah, you don't know England, I can see. That's what everyone says who doesn't know it. It's not grey at all.'

'The towns are grey and so are the buildings,' said Mrs. Howarth. 'Look at this house. Grey as a mist.'

'Green is our colour,' said Mr. Meredith. 'England's green and pleasant land. That puts it in a nutshell.'

'What about the dark Satanic mills?' said someone.

Mr. Meredith puffed out his cheeks.

'Green?' said Jeanne, as if to herself. 'I wonder.' Her eyes fell on Alan for an instant and he felt challenged, as at the other times he had met her. He felt that she had known all the time he was going to be there, and was mocking him. She was better than the others. Their laugh was hard, and hers was impulsive, almost childish. They were all so sophisticated and studied, and she seemed to be natural. She had something of her own, which made it unnecessary for her to exert herself as they did.

It was not yet really dark. The sky was turquoise. The jagged line of the hills rose and fell under the turquoise sky, and she glowed against it like a flame in a white sheath, making him think of blue summers and lagoons, and olive trees, in climates he had never seen. Her lips and finger-nails were deep red. Candles were lit on the table and shone on the wall behind her, and on the green creeper, which seemed like a vine. After dinner

she walked back into the house behind Mrs. Willoughby Howarth, passing between him and the wall. He wanted to put his arm round her waist. By the time the dance had begun he became very nervous. He danced with Margaret Curtis. She was nineteen and pretty and as different from Jeanne as a flower from a precious stone.

'You're very silent, Alan. What are you thinking about?'

'Nothing.'

'You were dining here, weren't you? One of the honoured. Mother and father weren't sure if they'd bring me, you know.'

'Why not?'

'Oh, you know what everyone says about Mrs. Howarth. She's supposed to be a bad influence. I'm awfully glad I came. Have you seen the lights by the stream? It's lucky it's a fine night.'

They went out and he kissed her stiffly under the trees. She pressed against him, eager to be daring, eager to be like these exotic people from London, but she was too much like himself. She wanted a sensation which she could not excite him to provide. It was not their bodies, but their upbringing that came into contact, muffling the desire.

'Why don't we dance out here?' she asked.

'You've got to get back to your partners.'

'Damn my partners. I'd rather stay here.'

'What about mine?'

'You've got such a conscience. They can easily find somebody else.'

'No, we must go back. I've got to dance with all the guests. I promised to at dinner.'

'Which ones?'

'All of them.'

She said nothing and he took her back to the house. Jeanne was his next partner. She was still dancing and he did not know if he should interrupt. But she detached herself and came towards him.

'I thought you were going to cut me.'

THE CASTLE

He was very apologetic.

'I'm afraid I'm not much good at dancing,' he said.

'We'll try once and see.'

They tried once. She was so light, although she came up to his shoulder, that he might have been dancing by himself.

'No,' she said, 'you're no good. What are you good at?'

It was important not to say 'nothing'; so he tried to be gallant and suggested going into the garden.

'Oh, no, my dear. Those gloomy hills everywhere. What a terrible place this is. Let's go upstairs.'

She pressed his arm and he followed her off the floor. Out of bravado he hoped that Margaret Curtis had seen them. He was as nervous as someone before going into action.

They went into Jeanne's bedroom. It smelt like a scentshop. The windows were open and he could see the dark ridge of the hills outside. The music came up from the stream and they saw the couples dancing under the magic lanterns.

'You oughtn't to be so hard on this country,' he said. 'If you knew it you'd like it. It's not gloomy at all.'

'It makes me shudder. Look at those hills.'

'Have you ever been up there?'

'Good gracious, no.'

'You see, you don't know anything about them.'

He was being masterful, because this was what he thought he ought to be and what she expected.

'No, I don't know anything about them,' she answered slowly. She turned to him suddenly and said: 'Let's draw the curtains.'

They stood on either side of the big window and pulled at the cords. The curtains met in the middle and so did they. He put his arm round her waist, but when she looked at him she was smiling and he still had the sensation that he was being laughed at. With the view shut out his own element had gone, and he was stranded among the bowls of flowers and the scent bottles and the luxurious bed, more magnetic and more alarming than a mountain. They sat down on it. He hated his own awkwardness. His hands seemed to have swollen to twice their natural size.

'I knew that you would be here to-night,' she said.

'I knew that you were coming. I wanted to meet you after the last time.'

'So did I.'

He kissed her and she lay back on the bed, always watching him. He tried to keep up the ludicrous pretence of being experienced in love, guessing already that she had seen through him and was disappointed. He wanted her but he had no confidence in himself. He was still half thinking that the door was not locked and that the house was full of people. He heard his mother's insidious voice. . . .

'Alan, don't forget to see the lights are out. . . .'

'How tall you're getting, Alan. . . .'

'Alan, how pretty Margaret Curtis looked. . . .'

It was not what he wanted and yet he was tied to it and the ties were very strong. He had an impulse to take Jeanne violently, an impulse that came to him out of fear. His hands moved over her without interest, while he was rousing himself to this point.

'Have you ever been with a woman before?' she said.

'No . . . as a matter of fact I haven't.'

She smiled. 'You're worrying, aren't you?'

'Yes.'

'You don't need to. Lock the door and then we can relax. Put out the big lights.'

While he did this she put on a small lamp on the dressing table, so that most of the room was in shadow. They undressed and lay on the bed together. He was still worried. His mind was still after him. 'Should I not have done something about the precautions? Should I not have done this or done that? Surely it is for me to take the lead?' But now that he had told the truth he felt easier.

Soon the dam broke, first in his body, then in his mind. He drew the light counterpane over them and they rested. This time she closed her eyes. Their fingers were loosely clenched and he looked at her in silence. After a long time he said:

THE CASTLE

'When did you first have an affair?'

'My dear, it's so long ago, I can hardly remember. It was at home. I was madly in love.'

'I suppose twenty-two is old.'

'Is that your age?'

'Yes.'

'I don't know. You English are so strange.' She looked at him, laughing. 'Life is short, you know,' she said.

'How old are you?'

'How old do you think?'

'Twenty-eight,' he said gallantly, feeling like old Mr. Meredith.

'Well, I'm twenty-nine.'

In fact she was thirty-three and the lines showed faintly on her forehead. He drew back the counterpane and caressed her.

'You're learning already,' she said.

Her whole body was stained a deep brown, even her breasts and hips, so that she must have been lying naked in the Mediterranean sun for hours and days on end.

'I feel very northern beside you,' he said.

His body was unusually white. Climbing had developed the muscles and he had powerful arms and shoulders.

'Never mind, Alan. You'll unfreeze. Now we must get dressed. What is Mrs. Howarth going to say?'

'I should think she'd approve.'

'I'm sure she would. She loves pairing people off.'

'Thank God for Mrs. Howarth.'

Jeanne laughed. She pressed his wrist and went across the room to the dressing-table. He wanted to make her stay. The change in his feelings surprised and excited him. The impulse to violence returned, but calmer and less morbid, and not aroused by his own fear. He wanted to stay so that this time he could possess her in his own right. He held back on the verge, still checked by shyness and convention, and the moment passed. He could feel it passing and with it a chance of power, all that he knew from it was that this power existed and that he wanted

it. But he did not take it. They had to go downstairs and join in.

'You two, your eyes are shining,' said Mrs. Howarth lecherously, guessing at their absence and excited by her party; which had become a great success. 'Wherever have you been? Jeanne, everyone's been asking for you.'

'Well, here I am. Now, who is asking?'

And she was carried off, holding her partner a little away from her, her forearm resting on his and her hand touching his shoulder.

'Isn't she beautiful?' said Mrs. Howarth. 'What do you think of her?' and she hugged his arm and looked at him sideways. Mrs. Meredith said:

'Well I never, Alan. Going off into the garden with the best-looking woman in the room. Just as well your mother isn't here.'

They all wanted to know and to join in. He and Jeanne were the young and they were the old. He felt generous towards them. He could manage much better with Margaret Curtis when he next danced with her. There was no restraint on his side because he had no interest in her. It astonished him that he could be so light-hearted in what seemed to be unscrupulous behaviour. He was considerate and polite to her. She had noticed his absence, of course, and after a time she worked round to it.

'Who is the woman in the white dress, Alan, the one you disappeared with?'

'She's a friend of Mrs. Howarth's. She's staying in the house.'

'Of course she's a friend of Mrs. Howarth's. Otherwise she wouldn't be here. You seem to be rather taken by her.'

He didn't answer.

'She's very striking,' said Margaret Curtis. 'Rather Egyptian looking.'

'Egyptian?'

'Like one of those sculptures. Who is it . . . Queen Nefertiti or someone? I like her hair style. I think I must try a fringe. How old is she?'

'How old would you think?'

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'Thirty-five. She must have been marvellous when she was younger.'

He caught a glimpse of Jeanne as she went round, reflected in a silver mirror on the wall, animated, unprincipled, brazen, admired, and looking up at her partner as if he was the only man in the world. She must have been stared at so often that she was no longer aware of the people admiring her. She had absorbed them. This was how she passed into his memory, as a brief dancing reflection in a mirror, glowing and sunburnt under the lights. The night melted and the deep blue of the morning before dawn appeared, as if yesterday evening had returned. Cars drove away, leaving the tracks of their tyres in the dew, and taking with them a mystified Margaret Curtis and two parents, who were a little resentful because they had enjoyed themselves. The house guests went on dancing until dawn and though Alan often saw Jeanne's eyes on him he could not get her alone. At last she came up to him:

'My dear, I'm going to bed,' she said. 'Will you come to see me off in the morning?'

'See you off?'

'Alas, I have to go back. By the midday train. I don't know that I shall ever catch it. You'll be there, won't you? Then I shall give you my address.'

She gave it him on the platform. What was the use of it? The Villa Floresque, Saint Raphael. He did not know where Saint Raphael was, except that it was in France, hundreds of miles away, out of his world. It might have been on the moon. He supposed she was used to people who travelled from country to country as he did from village to village. He could not even kiss her, there in public, with faces gazing out of the carriage windows. The other guests were going back to London too, still chattering. They must have been talking in their sleep, non-stop. He saw local acquaintances staring at him and Jeanne. Some sheep were being herded into a cattle truck, with a farmer in a pork-pie hat and gaiters standing over them counting. School-children ran along the platform, with pink faces, swinging

satchels. It was the life of a small country town, not even on the main line, and there she stood, in a light cape with a buttonhole of roses, and a curved hat riding over her forehead like a ship, elegant, foreign, made up to the eyes.

'You'll come to see me one day, won't you?' she said. She wore grey gloves and she put one hand on his arm.

'Yes, if I can. You'd better get in now.'

'Au revoir, then. Don't forget. Good-bye, Alan.'

The train clanked out and she waved from the window. He would like to have gone away on his own for a little, but he had to return to his office and a friend came up. He put back the usual front.

In prison, particularly in the first months, he thought of her often. The war began two months after they had said good-bye, and her memory was still fresh when he was captured and he had met no one else. Lately, without ever seeing her, he had grown tired of her. He felt a distaste for his own desire always to go back. He wanted her because he had known her before and she was a kind of reassurance, someone to hold on to. Many of the other prisoners were the same. When he heard them talking about their wives, it seemed to him that they had no independence of their own. Their idea of love was not of another current which would meet and clash and merge with theirs, but of a raft to save them in the sea of their own helplessness. Men like Bill Franklin expected to be supported by their wives, not strengthened. Fred Martin and his friends, maddened with their restlessness, moaned night after night for women who were going to console and cushion them.

'Oh, my God,' said Fred, kicking the stove or angrily tearing a packing case to pieces for firewood, 'what couldn't I do with a big blonde?' He might do a lot to her, but not much with her. That was all they seemed to want and Alan felt out of touch with them.

And so he was left with his own memories. Always memories, always the past. Yet he did not wish it like that. He wanted to strike away on his own. He admired men who did not want to

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be comforted, like Tug, who lived unconsciously from within himself and was born to slip anchorages. He knew that he had initiative of his own. After all, he had not given in to prison. He had escaped three times, and now he was trying a fourth. He had not been content with the inaction in the first months of the war before he was taken prisoner. He had been a volunteer. That was positive, that was something. He took these moments of enterprise as the real clue to himself and remembered them at night when the negative destroying weight of the prison and the past seemed ready to annihilate him. He remembered how the letter had reached his battalion in the spring of 1940 . . . Names are called for of men willing to engage in a dangerous expedition in the immediate future . . . all that is needed is that they should be physically fit. Preference will be given to men who have spent a great part of their lives in the country . . . And he had volunteered, and been accepted, and embarked for Norway at Gourock, in April, 1940, expecting to come back a hero.

The commander of this mysterious force was a brisk dapper general with a reputation for being energetic and unorthodox. He had his finger always to his lips, it seemed, and was continually in contact with a nameless person in London or an agent known only by his number. Sometimes he disappeared and was thought to have left the ship entirely. Sometimes he dashed about so fast that there seemed to be several of him. He had a flair for sabotage and cutting communications. The day before he landed he made a little speech to his officers, telling them of the dangers they were going to face, and reminding them of similar adventures in the last war. There had been men, he said, who had ended commanding immense tracts of foreign country, the idols of the native population. Alan was deeply stirred. All saw themselves as Col. Lawrences.

Twenty-four hours later he went on deck, armed and in a steel helmet, and saw the shadowy Norwegian coast lowering above, pressing in like a pack of grey mountains with patches of white snow, drawing closer and closer to the ship's sides as she moved inland, clenched between the fjords. The north seemed to be his

destiny. The sky hung low, all clouds, and it was raining. He might have been at the end of the world, and yet it was very like his own home. He felt uneasy; never come back, all hope abandon. He imagined light-footed spies overlooking them on the headlands, and reporting their movements as they slid into the trap. When they docked, a swarm of French foreign legionaries, who had escaped from the whirlwind German advance, scrambled over the ship's sides and went back with her to England, after telling some terrible stories about the enemy. It was early morning and very cheerless and forbidding. A yellow town, all made of wood, stared at them dourly. A few Norwegians watched them with little interest as they filed through the streets.

The task of this force was to delay the Germans as they moved north to Narvik along the main road. They were to blow up bridges, lay ambushes, and give the impression that reinforcements had landed in large numbers. They had quantities of explosives which few of them knew how to use. No one had reliable information about the Germans. The Norwegians could not all be depended on. Three days after they had docked there was a report that the Germans had landed in their rear. The commander ordered a retreat, in which most of their explosives and equipment had to be abandoned. They retreated over twenty miles. It was disorderly and demoralizing and there was little discipline. This abrupt check to their impulsive hopes unsettled them.

It was the beginning of a complete fiasco. Retreat became the order of each day. They retreated by sea in fishing boats, hiding below deck, by roads exposed to air attack, through woods and hill passes, on long straggling journeys. They took up what were called positions for a few days and then were ordered to leave without having had a sight of the Germans. Little parties were sent off on forlorn searches for parachutists, deep into the mountains, and stayed out for twenty hours and more without seeing a soul. They returned without sleep and were sent off again. Had even one parachutist been lurking where they went,

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many of them could have been picked off as they advanced stumbling up the exposed slopes.

Alan had that sensation of always being on a lower level than the enemy. They were outflanked on the mountains by trained men from Austrian Tirol, who could travel rapidly among the peaks. During a withdrawal by fjord they were fired on and nearly sunk from cliffs. Even when they were on the peaks, a silent covey of aeroplanes swooped over them and left a furrow of bullets and blood in the snow. The villagers were friendly enough and fed them; but the soldiers had sensed the inevitability of defeat, and the officers had too little experience to disperse it.

The commander did what he could to revive the morale of his dispirited bands. He never seemed to be dispirited himself. He went about so rapidly that those immediately under him found it hard to keep track. His staff was a collection of bewildered amateurs and no match for him. He took great personal risks, vanishing in a high-speed car into a region where Germans had been reported. A message would be received that at such and such a time the general would be passing through and hot tea was to be prepared for him; and late at night the camouflaged car whisked up to Alan's sentry posts, a blind was pulled down, an arm shot out and emptied the tea into a white tense face.

'Everything all right? You're Maclaren, aren't you?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Splendid. Stick to it.'

And away he whisked, sleepless and indefatigable, but quite unable to produce any change in the situation.

The disastrous news from France filtered through on the Norwegian wireless, and at first Alan could not believe it, though he was taking part in the same kind of disaster himself. He had believed that Great Britain was invincible. It was as if a river had suddenly started to flow backwards. His soldiers had no false optimism. Discipline had to be tightened. His own feelings were the same as theirs, but he had to simulate others. The expedition was failing, but he had learnt a good deal for himself. The circle of his complacency had been broken. It gave

him a pang of shame to watch the exhausted troops trail past and to trail past with them, carrying guns they had never fired to positions they would not hold in a foreign country they would not save. A twist in his nature, which caused him to see more blame in himself than was really there, told him that these humiliations were his own fault.

At last he received an order which might mean action. The general withdrawal had been decided on, first to the neighbourhood of Narvik, and thence back home. The whole force, consisting of three or four worn out battalions, was streaming back along the one main road. At a critical point the road ended in a fjord, beginning again on the far side. Only a ferry connected it. The other route meant a long detour through the mountains, which ultimately rejoined the road round the edge of the fjord. Alan and his fifty men were told off to watch this detour and prevent any advanced bodies of Germans from using it, while the main force came across by the ferry. If the Germans came by the mountains, the main force would be cut off; he was defending the flank of several thousand men.

He took up satisfactory positions, for once on the highest ground. He could command all the flank approaches. He could see the road on both sides of the fjord. He could see the fjord, ice-blue, unruffled, with the town burning on the far side, and the crowded ferry shuttling to and fro. A river ran through the town, disgoring into the fjord, and beyond the smoking houses a rich green valley was spun out between the mountains, divided by the road southwards. It was along this road that the main German force could be expected. He had a perfect view of it all. The austere church spire pierced the smoke. Heavy lorries, which the ferry could not take, were being pushed into the fjord or set on fire on the jetty. Black splodges of men waited to embark. Long files of those who had already crossed trudged northwards and out of sight. The view was alive with these black spots of movement and the ferry was the pivot.

The sun shone, brilliant and warm. The snow round his positions had melted. He lay by a window in the midnight sun,

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in the hut which he used as his headquarters, reading Fielding's *Tom Jones*. The night was shorter than a fit of anger. When morning broke over the hilltops, he went the round of his lonely outposts and looking down at the water saw that the town on the far side was deserted. The rose and primrose of sunrise shone in the blue surface, and out of these soft colours stuck the jagged wreck of the ferry. The jetty was all ablaze and clouds of smoke drifted across. The last rearguards were on the road, and the commander's car threaded its way between them. Stragglers who had taken the mountain detour passed through his positions. They had been on the move all night and were unkempt and unshaven, some of them even without rifles, and mostly soaking wet from fording the river. The colour on the peaks grew stronger. One of his soldiers touched his arm.

'Look, sir!'

He focused his binoculars on the town. A swarm of bees or a migration of locusts seemed to be settling on it. Details sprang into line; the square, the names over ruined shops, the flames flickering at windows, and then spots moving among them, at first ones and twos, then hundreds. The Germans were entering. He lifted his glasses to the valley beyond and saw the whole advance. Hordes of them were coming up between the green fields with patrols out on the mountain sides. They were so sure of themselves that they were advancing in close formation.

Over his shoulder he saw what was left of the British retreat, and comparing the disordered disillusioned rout with the systematic cocky advance he had a spasm of indignation and despair. The whole civilization in which he had been brought up, in which he had believed, was in retreat. It wasn't just an army, it was everything. This was the end. He felt that they were taking his lifeblood away with him.

A signaller handed him a message.

Commence withdrawal 0800 hours.

It was already 0830. He called in his outposts and set his own plan in motion. Two-thirds of his men were on their way back when a machine-gun rattled among the peaks, not far off, and

bullets scudded round him. He saw the Austrians five hundred yards away. It was a great game for them. They took their time, spreading out their ground-sheets deliberately on the snow-sodden ground, and aiming as if at target practice. As he dropped out of sight, he felt a sudden fire in his leg.

It did not tell for several minutes. The attack was not pressed, so that he could make sure all his positions were evacuated and get some way at the double to the next bound, scrambling among torrents and loose rocks. Then his leg began to go cold and stiff.

‘Are you all right, sir?’

The soldiers tried to support him, but it meant that three men were slowed down instead of one. He could still walk, although painfully, and they had their orders and knew what to do. After a mile they reached cover. He told them to leave him, and after the usual offers of assistance they did as they were told. He sat by a stream, slashed open his trouser leg, and bathed and dressed the wound, listening for any sound of the pursuers. It was a flesh wound, through the thigh, missing the bone, but in an awkward place to bind and causing a rapid stiffening of the limb. After he had bandaged it he walked on under cover, resting every few minutes and swearing to himself. He was still on the high ground, with the fjord glittering below, and the hot sun beating on the snowdrifts.

Far off, he saw the last of his troops retreating, to the ships, to Narvik, home. Many of the Norwegians had come into the hills from their villages, pitching tents, finding caves, lighting fires; once he passed a woman giving suck to a baby among the rocks. Trying to descend nearer the fjord, he slipped and went headlong down a rocky slope. A spear seemed to have been thrust violently into his side and he fainted. When he came to, five German soldiers with peaked hats were standing over him. They took him to captivity in stages. He remembered the smartness of their equipment, their air of confidence, and their patronizing commiseration. They might have been on a parade ground; one even had the scabbard of his bayonet still polished.

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The farther back he went, the more there were, sunburnt, with open shirts, as if on a holiday. Everything had been plain sailing for them. Aircraft roared overhead, protecting them; Alan had seen one British plane in five weeks. They treated him usually as one of an inferior race who had been misled into opposition. He felt his ignominy keenly. They were on the crest of the wave.

These were the memories over which he brooded during his years of captivity, lying in bed with a cigarette stub burning into the dark, and the mill wheel thudding. They were bad things to remember and prison was a bad place to be remembering them. They were memories of retreat and of failure. The long empty wasted hours and the news of great actions all over the world, to which he contributed nothing, made a nightmare of them. All or nearly all that he had done seemed to have been negative, and whenever he had taken any positive action it had come to nothing. He had the conventional belief that men prove themselves in action and in their conduct towards women. Action had brought him to prison. He had taken Jeanne, but in a feeble scared way, as a child takes something put into its hand. The weakness he had felt with her came back to him with a sense of shame. He had stopped short. The chimes had started ringing and they had not gone on.

He longed, in many ways, to be completely free. To be free himself and to belong to a country and to a world that was free. Others had longings as persistent, obsessions as overpowering, more overpowering than his own, and were disturbed in their minds even while they were asleep. A moaning came from Jim Irving's bed. Often, at other camps, Alan had heard moans and sudden cries, as the prisoners struggled with themselves, but never any like these. They began low and choking and rose steadily to a vulpine howl, sustained and desperate, as if a devil or a beast were trying to escape from Jim's body. He listened frozen, really afraid.

'Jim,' he called out. 'Jim, stop it.'

He jumped out of bed and gently shook him awake.

YES, FAREWELL

'Christ, I've never heard such a noise,' he said. 'Are you all right?'

Jim looked at him bewildered. He seemed suddenly much older and Alan was sorry for him. After a little he said quietly, 'Yes, I'm all right. It was a nightmare. What did I say?'

'You didn't say anything. You were howling. I've never heard anything like it.'

'Sorry to wake you up.'

'I was awake. Are you all right now?'

'Yes, thanks. I'm all right.'

V

It was five to eleven now and time for him to start his night watch. He pulled on a greatcoat and padded along the cold fortress corridors to the silence-room, where he relieved Brian.

'Anything happening?'

The arc-lights fell on Brian's taut face, huddled into his collar, peering aslant through the bars so that the sentries could not see him.

'They changed at 10.30. They're walking a bit brisker than usual. I suppose it's colder.'

'Shall I stay after midnight?'

'It's not necessary. Time the beats as usual. Keep well back. You don't want to be seen. Good night.'

'Good night, Brian.'

Alan took his place at the window. He put his luminous watch and note-book on the sill. The panes rattled. A wind was getting up. These gusts came suddenly through some cleft in the valley, spinning against the castle like whirling dervishes. They lasted about half an hour, and now it had begun. In the wood confronting him, banked to the skyline, the silhouetted trees tore with harpy fingers at the loose grey sky. The valley stretched like a giantess lying on her face in the dark, all humps and curves, the small hills like shoulder-blades and the river

streaming like white hair between them. The wind made so much noise he did not realize there were others in the room. He watched the sentries stamping along the battlements, swinging their arms across their chests, and now and then stopping to gossip, where their beats joined. Then, inside the room, he noticed two points of cigarettes, one swaying and describing arcs, the other still, and heard the Jew Litauer's voice dropping and soaring in that histrionic way.

'What shall I do?' he was saying. 'Shall I sing for you? Play music for you? Stand on my head?'

Morshead's dry voice answered him, all in one tone.

'No, you need do none of those things. Just go on talking.'

'How shall I make you smile? How shall I lure you from your shell?'

'Just go on talking. You do it very well. I like listening to you. No one else in this castle is worth listening to.'

'Nonsense, my dear. You are isolated, that is all. You are an intellectual among gentlemen. A snail among the roses.'

'So you think this castle is a rose-garden? The blooms are pretty decayed — Colonel Anstruther, that fellow Dempster, scores of them. . . .'

'We are prisoners, Stephen. We cannot be at our best. Even I cannot scintillate in chains.'

Morshead was silent a little. When he replied, he had a slightly didactic tone, working off ideas and grievances that had been accumulating too long.

'Prison is a convenient excuse,' he said. 'The deadness here is not only the deadness of prison. This castle is only a replica of England before the war. I'm not sure it isn't a forecast of England after the war as well.'

'Oh, come. They say there has been a renaissance. Even the German papers say that England is altering.'

'It'll take more than a war to lift the face of England,' Morshead said.

'You hate your own people, do you not, my sad young economist?'

'No, I do not hate them. I see what they are, and I think what they might be. That is all . . . Enough, too.'

'But you are disgusted. Angry and disgusted. I hear it in your voice. I see it in the way you shun people.'

'I was born in a beautiful part of England,' Morshead said. 'It is a free forest on the borders of Wales. You could see the mountains and feel there was something primitive, original, not very far away. You come out of the forest and there are the ruins of magnificent castles on one side, and the ruins of abandoned collieries on the other, and stunted men shifting about wretched grey streets and coming into the forest like outlaws. I went back there to teach, because I could not leave it. I do not hate England at all. I only hate, and then not always, the people who wished to stop me teaching. Colonel Anstruther . . . you know him?'

'The stout one?'

'Yes, the stout one, who is so generous with his cigarettes. Who made those speeches at the beginning of our imprisonment about peace with Germany. He lived near my home. When I came back, he tried to have me stopped teaching. He had friends on the County Council, so I had to be careful. I have to be careful here, even here,' he exclaimed, indignantly. 'So I say nothing. I come here into the dark after the lights out, and then I can speak.'

'You are exaggerating. You are making yourself like one of the German sentries. Really, things must have changed.'

'How much has Colonel Anstruther changed? They say he is going to a special rest camp. Rest camp! Why do the Germans choose him? Why not me?'

'They say you are a communist, my dear, and you would not go. Just as I am a Jew, and I would not go. Unless . . .' Marcus's voice became very silky, and perhaps his hands made balancing gestures . . . 'unless it was a very nice rest camp.'

Morshead laughed.

'You are an old fraud, Marcus. You speak to me of communism in a very friendly way, and all the time you are waiting

to go back to your big farm in Palestine and become as rich as Croesus. Isn't that true?'

Alan could almost see Marcus spreading his voice out into an elongated wheeling. 'No-o-o-o-o, that ees not quite true. No-o-o-o. You see I shall be happy whatever the government, so long as it is not against my people, naturally. I have my work with my mind, even if I have not my farm. I can be persecuted anywhere, and I can live happy anywhere. My family left Vienna long before the last war, because they were persecuted, and they bought land in Palestine. Then it was privately bought, and I have taken it on, and very nice it is. But now they have started there owning land communally, and I have seen these communal settlements, and they are very nice also. I shall not object if they weesh me to be communal.'

'Are you sure, Marcus?'

'Certainly. Why not?'

An owl hooted in the gale, a high unfinished cry, three times repeated among the branches. Sometimes the guards swung the arc-lamps round towards the wood, and Alan had seen the owls sitting there like oracles, blanched for an instant as the light passed over them. The steel door was rattling now in the wind, and he could scarcely hear the two voices. He wished that they would speak up. They seemed to be on the point of answering questions which he had not yet even formulated. The cigarette waving circles belonged to Litauer. Alan made out his clumsy powerful shape, leaning forward from the packing-case arm-chair. When one of them knocked his ash, a firework of sparks fell; sometimes three stubs glowed, as one of them lit up again. Evidently they had been talking for some time. He wanted to know more about them. They lived on the other side of the castle and he saw them seldom. He had had that prompting to invite them, out of all the three hundred, to Simon's supper party. When he next heard them, Marcus was saying something about revolution:

'So many wheels are being revolved, so many forces and fronts are being turned. The centuries weigh heavy on the spirit and

the volcano erupts in many different streams. Art and music, science and religion, over men together and over men as individuals. I suppose you would say that the economic revolution is the heart of it all.'

'I might.'

'Certainly those who have to prepare its details are the most boring,' said Marcus courteously. 'Inevitably, you are becoming a bore. To me, at all events, and I am one of those who agree with you. I am more interested in the revolution in the mind, or in love. Yes, in love. Have you read D. H. Lawrence?'

'A little.'

'You should read more. Read him as a change from your Marx and your Engels. You are losing blood, Stephen, with all this study. Read Lawrence, and he will put some of it back. He had his idea of a revolution, had he not?'

'O start a revolution, somebody!
Not to instal the working classes,
But to abolish the working classes for ever,
And have a world of men!'

'What *does* that mean, precisely?' Morshead asked.

'It means the phallus instead of the hammer and sickle. It would be quite a good revolution for you. You and many Englishmen.'

'All that will follow in a free world,' said Morshead. 'Besides, Lawrence was a fascist, in many ways.'

'There you go! What is a fascist? One who persecutes Jews? An inspired reactionary? A secular Roman Catholic? A crank economist? A visionary sergeant-major? A repressed scout-master? How was D. H. Lawrence a fascist, please?'

'He was a shirker. He wanted to alter society, and he was always running away from it. Have you read his letters?'

'They are by my bedside,' Marcus said mockingly. 'Under the Talmud.'

'He is always telling people that society must be transformed, yet he will never admit that the transformation must be econo-

mic. It is not romantic enough, not animal enough. He despises people who sit down to work it out. We are too mental, too intellectual. We do not copulate enough. So away he goes to Mexico to start a revolution by copulation, and the slums and squalor in England are no better off than before. It may be very beautiful,' said Morshead, with smug spite, 'but it is not practical.'

'And you are practical?'

'I am studying the disease, the economic disease, instead of relying on some magical intuition.'

'But you have that intuition? You have some motive of love that spurs you on, concealed somewhere?' Morshead did not answer. 'You have, have you not?' Still he did not answer. 'Never mind. It would perhaps embarrass you to admit it,' Marcus said teasingly. After a pause he added, as if to himself: 'Lawrence, yes . . . a revolution of physical love. And Tolstoi and Dostoevski, a revolution of spiritual love.'

'Neither of them has worked, anyhow,' Morshead said curtly. 'I don't know much about Lawrence. I suppose he did something to make men freer. But Tolstoi and Christianity and all that love-one-another philosophy . . . why, it's been going for two thousand years. What has it done that the Russian revolution did not do in twenty years, as soon as the Russians decided to try action instead of resignation? Tolstoi may be immortal, but he held them up. He side-tracked them. Just as in England we are side-tracked by preachers on love. Love!' he said contemptuously. 'An excuse for doing nothing!'

'So there has to be hatred, and violence?'

Morshead resumed his dry unemotional tone. 'Whether we like it or not,' he said, 'in Europe, all round this castle, in a year or two, there will be hatred and violence. Huge waves of it. You see those slave workers of the Germans in the factory, down there in the town. They are not going to try a cure by love, are they? With me, it is partly a practical question, to be decided at a given moment by given circumstances. Partly a question of moods. Sometimes I should like to burn the whole of this castle down. It is the same with society. Sometimes I should

like to sweep the entire fabric out of sight and out of memory. We have grown very stale and very selfish in England. We have become choked. The war gave us a release, but who can say that the release will lead to freedom? I am afraid we shall become choked again. So I wish to cut a way right through, and at once, and that is what I work for.'

'You are bitter, are you not?'

'Often, yes. When I look at my fellow Englishmen in this castle, often very bitter. That is why I keep to myself. I do not wish to mar the idea with my own bitterness, and at present I do not have it under control.' His cigarette glowed steadily, and Alan thought how like it he was, small and smouldering and concentrated. Marcus continued on his note of raillery, deliberately drawing Morshead out.

'You are lost in the means, Stephen. You have forgotten the objective.'

'On the contrary, I have a clearer idea than most people. A free world.'

'A clear idea, perhaps, for what is to be done to-morrow, or the next day, or in the next ten years. But could not you stand back a leetle, just enough to see over the top of the present day? Could you not lift people's heads above the barricades, so that they can see clearly the beautiful city beyond, and would they not then agree to go there without a fight?'

'It's just words. You know it is.'

'All that is too sentimental, I suppose.' Marcus sighed.

'Meaningless.'

'And so there has to be fisticuffs?'

'In Europe.'

'And in England?'

'I don't know what is happening in England now. I've told you what I saw before the war. Weeds everywhere, and poisonous and corrupt ideas, and young men — older men, too — trying to get free of them. And many young men not knowing what they wanted, not having reached even that stage.'

'Yes, I was in England too,' said Marcus. 'I understand the

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English. We Jews are clever at understanding nations, because we have to understand them. And Englishmen had become as they are now in this castle. They were closed up, tight, like this,' . . . and he clenched his big fist . . . 'but if only they could be unwound!' . . . and he threw open his fingers like a sunflower. 'It is sad, to what we have come. What is old has become rotten and hard, what is new has become raucous and bludgeoning in order to break it. It has to be, and it has happened before. But it is sad to observe so little merging, so much perversion.'

'What do you mean?'

'I will give you examples. You have your great British Empire, and look now, what is said about it. Your Colonel Blimps fall down and worship it, as if it were perfect and sacred; and you, reacting, sneer at it and call it a game preserve for public schoolboys. Neither is true. One day it will be recognized as something to have industrialized and governed a quarter of the world, and also as something not to have done it better.

You have your patriotism. Many young men here are proper jingoes. They will not hear a word against the British. They have no modesty, only a false modesty of laughing at your big mistakes, which should be treated as crimes. And you, reacting, disparage the achievements of your country — yes, I have often heard you — until I wonder if you have ever achieved anything good at all. Those tiresome young men tell me that Great Britain saved the world; they talk of America as an annex, and Russia as a poor relation. And you speak at times as if Great Britain were not in the war at all. Neither is true. There is a love of country. It is something, I am telling you, to belong to a nation and have a history of creative life. The Russians have no classes now. They have no rich people whose interest it is for everyone to be patriotic. Yet they know what it means to belong to Russia.'

'Very well. Knock out the pins. Remove the classes.'

'Oh, I am not contradicting. I am only lamenting a little about England. You are my Wailing Wall. I am only lamenting how little room there is now for the truth, for reason. I am not being practical, I am talking for the sake of talking, and soon we

shall go to bed. What is another example of this perversion? Oh, yes. The old people say, we must build upon the past. The young people say, we must break with the past. The old people have vested interests in the past, they are its shareholders, the rich, and the middle rich. And the others are the poor and the angry, who do not know much about the past except they never got much out of it. Yet neither is true. Much of your past is nauseating. I can smell it from here. Yet you cannot break with the past. You know that there is no such action as an underived advance. You can break with part of it, as you can break with part of a wife; but there is still the alimony, hers or yours, and the children, and a leetle taste of her. And every hour you live you are building up the past yourself, are receding into it and stepping out of it. The clock in the town will strike, my watch will move, and we shall have stepped from an old thought in that minute to a new thought.'

The raillery began to leave his voice. Its inflections performed controlled aerobatics and his cigarette described arabesques. He was the orator sure of his audience. Alan felt drawn. Yet he withheld something English and stubborn, which kept him suspicious of this flamboyance.

'Why cannot people seize the truth before it is forced upon them?' Marcus said. 'If only the English, and all the peoples, could be inoculated with a little syringe of prophecy and foresight, like us Jews, like Marx, like Christ. Then they would see that the river must flow, whether liberalism is the name yesterday, or communism the name to-morrow, to-day, and no dam will stop it, no conduit will divert it. Let them accept the river of liberty and harness it. Let them shoot the rapids.'

'But people are cowards, especially in England, where cowardice is called the invaluable gift of compromise. What energy you have in that country, hiding in safe places or dark places, scarcely conscious of itself, not stored but stagnant! Even in this castle you see what energy could be released, could someone but turn the key in the fountain and the water gush out! You are teaching that soldier, are you not?'

'Fisher?'

'Fisher, yes. He has quickness and energy he scarcely knows of, and I believe — looking on, watching, I am sure of it — there are millions like him. Among the others, too, the well-educated as they are called. Here in this castle, look at them!'

'I'd rather not.'

'Ah, because you are proud and bitter. But I am not so magnificent. I like to have friends and conversation, and so I speak to people. And I see that they have lost enthusiasm, except perhaps for themselves, which is not enthusiasm. They are audacious no more. Three years they have been here, and many of them have done nothing. They escape. That is something, that is difficult. I admire Clyde. He is a one-track mind, and like you a bore. But he is audacious and he goes his way. If only it were not to escape! I said to myself when I came here, I would rather die than try to escape. I am middle-aged, it is time to study.'

'Clyde's a regular soldier. He can't think of anything except the army. It's his job.'

'Very well, then, he is right. But the others . . . that moody one . . . Irving . . . he has depths, I guess it. And that one who came into our room, the big one with the white face. . . .'

'Me,' thought Alan, and hoped they would discuss him. But Marcus was in his stride now, coming into the straight:

'I would give some fingers,' he said. 'I don't know how many but I would give some to have back my yout' after this war. I would be the modern hero, although I am a Jew; the modern hero, in whom all the past heroes will be combined. The hero of Lawrence was all spunk and little intellect. The hero of Tolstoi was all intellect and fine spirit and little spunk. I should have both spunk and intellect, and quantities of both. Mr. Ernest Hemingway's hero was a communist. Past heroes have been individualists. I should be a communist, because communism is the archangel spirit of this age, and part of the unfolding of human liberty.'

Marcus paused and the good humoured mockery in his voice

became more marked. 'They say you are a communist,' he observed, 'and you are becoming very grim and very dull. Mr. Ernest Hemingway's hero was rather dull; a bit of a prig. I regret this tendency among communists. It is quite unnecessary. My hero would not be a victim of it.'

'Lately an ugly suggestion of austerity has crept across England, if we are to believe the German newspapers. Leading intellectuals are going about praising the self-denial of the early Christian martyrs. Your revolutionaries appear to have inherited your grisly Puritan streak. I don't like it. I don't believe it is really natural to the English people nor to any people; all have had enough rationing already, without extending it to their impulses. Communism is a step towards and not away from fullness of life. The discipline necessary is a discipline of personal vanity, careerism and susceptibility to admiration, a pin to prick the balloon of self-inflation. It is not a discipline to curb pleasure and joyousness and high spirits. My hero would not be at all austere. I would rather have no revolution and no renaissance at all than have it mothered by a gang of refrigerated visionaries, who are not interested in women and drink nothing but barley water.'

'But I should always say to myself, beyond and through the truth of the community lies the truth for the individual. Not the selfish truth, but the free one, the new one. I should keep my hand dipped in that although the world had not reached it yet. I should be what the world is to become. What a hero I should be!'

'And as you can't be, where will you find him?'

'I: I shall not look for him. I am not a novelist. I am a farmer by profession and a student of dreams by hobby. Besides, accident and the age will produce him, and sooner or later someone will draw the portrait. He may come from the fields into the towns, or go from the towns into the fields. Someone simple, in whom the whole world can unfold as he travels through it. Or someone complicated, who will arrive at simplicity by way of terrible complexities, and so be a mirror of the world. It does end like that, for the ones who go on struggling.'

Many people will find it so, after some years. The figures will cease to go round in the head. The tangled strands will part. I have known it to happen in dreams, and it is true in life, and in history.'

'I hope so. Anyhow, it's all talk.'

Their chairs were creaking. Alan saw them get up, stub out their cigarettes and stretch themselves.

'And will you write a book about these dreams we tell you, Marcus?' Morshead asked.

'A book? A book? Maybe I shall. After twenty, thirty years. when I am old and have dreamt many dreams and heard many dreams of others. I have thought of the name already. I shall call it *The Second Africa*. Yes, the mind's dark continent. What jungles are there, what Orinocos! Even in this castle, the dreams. that people tell me betray worlds of things unknown and unexplored. Sometimes there are monsters, sometimes birds of paradise, and much that I do not understand. Much that I am sorry for. Yes, there is distress here, under the surface.'

The steel door clanged behind them and Alan was left alone. The conversation had excited him. He had never heard anything like it. It was the language of a far country, and he had not understood all of it. He walked along the corridor to his room, wanting to follow Marcus and Morshead, restless and dissatisfied with himself. He looked into the yard. It was like a dungeon with the roof off. A sentry patrolled with a fixed bayonet, a black Alsatian padding at his heels, and his footsteps echoed softly, softly, insidiously. He stooped occasionally, picking up the prisoners' cigarette ends. The poverty, ignorance and misery of the world came over Alan, and his own failure to achieve anything. Wasted, pointless years! and yet others had been able to make use of them. Suddenly he hoped that he would lose the toss with Jim. He remembered what Marcus had said the other day. . . .

'Why do you want to escape? Why not stay here? You would become wise . . . wise . . . wise . . .'

BEFORE he went to sleep that night Alan had chivalrous ideas of giving up his place to Jim in the escape without even tossing for it. Jim's nightmare had really alarmed him. Back of it there was some exhausting conflict. If there was a chance to get out of the castle somehow Jim should be the one to take it. He himself could study. He could make up for the lost years. Probably there would be one more to go, and if he settled down he might learn many things. He would ask Litauer and Morshead. He felt resentment suddenly against his education, which had saddled him with the past without spurring him into the future. Greece and Rome, Queen Elizabeth, the Napoleonic wars, Cicero, Shakespeare . . . it had put him under dust sheets. He needed to shake himself out.

He had little sleep that night. About five-thirty he was abruptly woken up. The castle was full of noise. Bill was at a window looking into the court-yard.

'There's a search,' he said. 'Bastards! Come on, boys, no more sleep.'

Jim and Alan got out of bed. Alan felt tired and irritated and Jim looked as if he had not slept all night. They dragged the bedclothes off Tug and pulled him by the shoulder.

'Get up, Tug. There's a search.'

A procession of Germans had entered the court-yard. They carried pickaxes, sound detectors, x-raying machines to see through the walls, spades and crowbars. They were directed by a Captain Lissow, the Security Officer. Usually the prisoners had warnings of these searches from the sentry, but this morning Lissow had caught them off their guard.

In Alan's room they hurried to hide anything the Germans were likely to confiscate. There was a screwdriver, a map or two, and an English newspaper. Everything else was on the other side of the castle.

They stood round irresolute. Their reactions were slow and they felt impatient with themselves. At last they decided to push

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the stuff under a cupboard. They went back to bed and pretended to be asleep when Lissow entered with an N.C.O., known as the Sneak, and a drowsy sentry.

'Get up please, gentlemen,' said Lissow. 'There is a search.'

'Oh my God!'

'What do you want to come at this hour for?' said Tug.

'I'm sorry,' said Lissow blandly, 'we shall not keep you long. I *hope* we shall not keep you long. It will depend on you.' The Sneak stood behind him smiling amiably. The Sneak was a very ugly man, with iron-rimmed spectacles and a long pointed nose, suitable to be poked into other people's affairs, and large handlebar ears, suitable for overhearing other people's conversations. He smiled continually and gave an air of wanting to be loved.

These two Germans were the most astute in the castle. They worked together very closely. Lissow, the Captain, was meticulous, cunning and intellectual. The Sneak, a Corporal, was meticulous, cunning and manual. Lissow gave the orders and the Sneak carried them out. Lissow was said to be a member of the Nazi party and had great influence over the Commandant, a regular soldier of the old school. In civilian life he had been a schoolmaster at Leipzig. He had visited England many times, understood the English better than most Germans, and knew how to make them lose their balance without ever losing his. To shout at them or to threaten them was to invite ridicule. Treidfeld made a fool of himself because he had never learnt this. Lissow met the prisoners' stale humour with a sly wit that infuriated them and an artful tolerance, as if they were lunatics. He made out that he had no wish to annoy them and caused them endless inconvenience and discomfort. He loved to carry out reprisals. Once he took away all their washing things. On many occasions he stopped their mail. His chief punishments were taking away the electric light bulbs and closing the theatre. He pretended that he had to obey orders from above, but they knew that he enjoyed it. He promised to get them things they needed, such as brooms and clean straw for their palliasses, but

he seldom carried out his promises. He always had an excuse.

'You will understand, gentlemen, that things are very scarce in Germany. They have been scarce for a long while. Germany is not a rich country. Perhaps you could write to your friends in England or to the American Red Cross. They are all so generous and so rich.'

He sent off such requests promptly; he knew it took about four months to get an answer. He was very suave and very irritating.

He had grafted this manner on to the Sneak, who copied it without understanding the effect it had on the prisoners. Lissow knew that he annoyed; it gave him a subtle consciousness of his power. The Sneak annoyed and believed that he conciliated. He had never been to England, but Lissow must have told him a great deal, for now he spoke about the English as if he had known them all his life. Alan had heard him explaining to the sentries that prisoners are people in an abnormal state, who have to be treated with tolerance. 'The English are not like us,' he said. 'When you have been here a few months you will recognize the attitude that is to be adopted.' Like Lissow he was polite and watchful; it was due to these two men that most attempts at escaping had been dismal failures.

Lissow turned the prisoners out of their sleeping quarters and put them in a big draughty attic in their pyjamas. They soon stopped protesting. They were used to him. Peter Wade went on, saying that the Brigadier ought to do something about it, but he knew perfectly well nothing would or could be done; Lissow apologized, but as far as he was concerned, they knew they might be left there all day. They read books if they'd remembered to bring them, or went to sleep, sitting on the floor with their backs against the wall. Bill Franklin was telling a party of new prisoners about previous searches way back in 1940. He liked people to know what he had been through.

'I got a rifle butt in the jaw once. Swine! All this talk about re-educating them . . . they're just savages. I've had three and a half years of it and I know.'

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He continued in his large nervous voice. The others closed their eyes or looked at him with resentment. Brian Clyde stared into the court-yard, where the Germans were collecting a hoard of contraband. He was worried about their equipment. The important stuff was well hidden, but Lissow was very thorough and special searchers had come from Dresden.

Alan stayed in his own room, so that the Germans could not afterwards be accused of having stolen anything. He and the sentry sat at opposite ends of the table waiting for the searchers and wondering who would start the usual conversation first.

'Yours?' the sentry said, nodding at the photographs of Bill Franklin's family.

'No, not mine. Those are mine,' Alan said in bad German.

'Is that your house?'

'Yes, do you like it?'

Rudi was one of the friendly sentries. He lived in the neighbourhood. Alan had often seen him bicycling home to his farm on afternoons off duty; he brought the prisoners flour and vegetables in return for cigarettes, which he sold at a profit in the village. He had a stupid good humoured expression. He looked much more like a farmer's boy than a soldier and held his rifle casually between his knees. Alan thought, 'One day he'll have an accident.'

'Do I like it?' he repeated. 'It's *prima*. I'd like to live there. Are you rich?'

'I shouldn't say rich,' said Alan.

'Not poor then?'

'No, not poor.'

'Which would you rather be, rich or free?'

'Free.'

Rudi chuckled. He took out a wallet and handed Alan a wad of photographs. First of all he glanced through the open door to see that nobody was coming. He could have been shot for hobnobbing with the prisoners.

'These are mine. That's the girl I'm going to marry. She's fine, isn't she?'

Alan thought her heavy and loutish.

'She's only nineteen,' Rudi said. 'She lives at Stettin. Her father's an ironmonger. He's quite well off. We're going to get married in the spring.'

'Will you get leave?'

'Don't know. She'll come here more likely. I'll bring her under the window and you can see her for yourself.'

'She looks very healthy.'

'She'll make a good wife. Plenty of children.' He grinned. 'You ought to have some girls in here.'

'Well, you arrange it.'

'They do at some camps. You're officers, though. It's different.'

He put his photographs back and again his eyes strayed to Bill Franklin's wedding group. He stood up and stared at them for some time.

'They're rich, aren't they?'

'Very rich indeed.'

'All dressed up.'

'Too rich, perhaps,' said Alan.

Rudi shook his head vigorously. 'No such thing.' He made the money gesture, rubbing the points of his fingers against his thumb.

'Money's everything.'

'Smoke?' asked Alan.

Rudi took an English cigarette, with a glance along the passage, and put it away in his pocket.

'Well, when's the war going to end?' Alan asked. He was not interested in the answer, but it might lead to a little trading.

'Don't know. Not this year. Next year, maybe. Ten years?' He shrugged his shoulders. 'Who can say?'

'It'll be over once the invasion starts,' said Alan.

'Once it starts, that's the point. When will that be?'

'Spring next year,' Alan said. 'Perhaps before.'

'Do you think you'll get through?'

'Of course.'

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'Yes, you'll get through all right,' said Rudi thoughtfully.

'You oughtn't to say that. Your newspapers say we can't get through.'

'*Ach, Scheiss . . .*' he made his other gesture, dropping one hand in front of his eyes as if brushing a fly off his nose. 'How long have you been a prisoner?' he said next.

'Three years last June.'

He shook his head gravely.

'*Ja, ja.* It's a hard life. War is inhuman. England and Germany ought to have had an agreement.'

They always said this. Some of them meant it. Rudi said it because everybody else said it; as far as he was concerned Germany could have had an agreement with anybody, provided the war ended.

'War is foolish,' he added, fidgeting with his rifle.

'Why not stop fighting then?'

'I have stopped. They won't send me back. I'm sick, tubercular.' He coughed, grinned and winked. 'They want to cure me but it's no good. I'm tubercular all right.'

'Why don't you all become tubercular? That would be one way of ending the war.'

'What can we do? We're the *kleine Volk*.'

It was one of the stock answers. The *kleine Volk*, who would do what they were told.

'You've got to hurry,' Rudi said. 'Otherwise you'll have the Russians here before you. Whew! You should see them!' He chuckled up his head. He wore a red ribbon through a button-hole, awarded for the first winter campaign in Russia. 'I never thought I'd get out alive. They're not like you and me,' he said.

'Why not?'

'Well, they're more. That's the first thing. They never stop and they're wild. I tell you what I saw one day, just to show you what they're like.' He leant across confidentially, his rifle lolling; he tapped on the table with grubby finger-nails bitten to the quick. That first winter, he said, he had been in the trenches on the Moscow front. The sun was shining, but it was bitterly

cold, many many degrees below zero. He felt as if his nose was falling off and he wanted to go to sleep. The Russian trenches were two hundred yards away. The country was bound stiff with snow, nothing but white plains of snow as far as you could see. Suddenly, over there, a gigantic man rose out of the earth and took off all his clothes. He rolled naked in the snow and rubbed fistfuls of it up and down his naked hairy body, stuffing it into his mouth and laughing, and beating his massive chest . . . Like a gorilla, just like a huge gorilla. You'd never have believed it. He must have been seven foot high. I'd have died of cold.'

'Did you shoot him?'

'Good gracious, no! I couldn't do anything but watch. I thought I ought to shoot him, but I didn't dare. He'd have come after me and eaten me, that's what I thought. They do eat one another, you know. It's quite true. In one of the prison camps it happened. Did you hear that?'

'They were starving,' said Alan, who knew this story.

'I expect so. Supposing you were starving, would you eat someone?'

'I don't know,' said Alan. This would be a good moment to work round to the trading. 'We're pretty hungry here sometimes.'

'Well, I thought this Russian would eat me. I was for keeping quiet. No one was looking, so I didn't do anything.'

'You could have been shot,' said Alan.

'Oh, yes.'

'You take a lot of risks.' Alan was just going to ask him if he could bring in any flour when they heard boots in the passage. Rudi jumped up, shouldering his rifle, and stood guard at the door. Lissow and the Sneak returned with the searchers.

'Ah!' said Lissow, smirking at them. 'Here is this room of dangerous young men. Lieutenant Maclaren, Flight Lieutenant Irving, Captain Franklin, and of course, Lieutenant Wilson. What are we going to find here to-day?'

The Sneak smiled paternally, admiring Lissow; what a game it was, and everyone so gentlemanly!

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Lissow limped slightly and walked leaning on a hooked ebony stick. He had a pale face with pouchy cheeks and a receding chin. A wound in the last war had made one leg shorter than the other and people said it was this that had rendered him so vindictive, like Goebbels's club foot. He had small pale eyes and never looked anyone long in the face.

He gave the Sneak an order. The Sneak darted forward, clicked his heels, and brought his hands facing inwards with his fingers together along the seams of his trousers.

'Ja, Herr Hauptmann.'

The search began. Lissow glanced sidelong at Alan all the time, hoping for a clue. The searchers came to the cupboard.

'Ah!'

The Sneak, of course, had found it. His long nose seemed to smell things out. Triumphantly he dragged at the stuff.

'Herr Hauptmann! A screwdriver! And a map!'

'Bring it here.'

Lissow smiled and spread the map out. Alan remembered that certain towns in it were marked.

'Another escape,' said Lissow, sighing. *'Switzerland again. And where have you hidden the suits?'*

Alan said nothing.

'In the tailor's shop, no doubt? Has the energetic Mr. Clyde been busy again?'

'You know everything,' Alan said heavily.

Lissow replied politely.

'Not quite everything. Almost everything.'

He gave orders to the sentries in rapid German and they settled down to make a morning of it. The room had become suspect. Lissow lit a cigarette and limped up and down the room. He looked unwell; it was said that his leg gave him pain. He puffed away and Alan knew that he was following up clues. It was unusual to catch the prisoners out like this. The map was important; he could tell from it that there was something in the wind. Alan felt anxious. Lissow was capable of anything. If he suspected them, he might move them into the solitary cells or even have

them sent to another camp, and Alan did not want that. He had a dread of being sent to one of the fortresses, where Fred Martin had been; when he thought of places like that he felt almost affectionate towards the castle.

'You are very restless in here, are you not?' Lissow said in English. 'Always up to something. It is foolish, you know.'

No answer.

'You should learn German,' said Lissow. 'You should read German literature. You have an opportunity. I give talks on German history every Monday and Thursday. Several of your officers come. Why don't you come?'

'I have been.'

'And you stopped?'

'Yes.'

'Was it too difficult for you? I can make it simpler.'

'I'm tired of propaganda.'

'Propaganda,' exclaimed Lissow in his sham amazement. 'How can talks on history and literature be propaganda?'

'You know perfectly well.'

Lissow's eyes dropped.

'You mistake me,' he said. 'You are all restless.'

'What do you expect?'

'But especially in here. Flight Lieutenant Irving is not well. He should go to your hospital for a rest. Captain Franklin does not like the winter, because he cannot play games in the yard.'

'Why not let us outside then? There's a football pitch in the village.'

'Alas, I should like to,' Lissow regretted in his most glutinous voice. 'The Commandant has suggested it to the Burgomaster, but he will not hear of it. The civilians do not like it. You can understand their feelings.'

'I've escaped before,' said Alan. 'I didn't find them very hostile.'

'Where was that?' Lissow asked slyly.

'You should know. You've got your records.'

'When you escaped the air raids had not begun. You still bombed military targets. Things have altered now. Now you bomb civilians and therefore I tell you it is dangerous for you to escape. I know what would happen to you outside. I'm anxious for you, believe me.'

'Really,' said Alan.

'Indeed I am.'

'I suppose we'd be torn to pieces,' Alan said ironically.

'There's no telling. It happened to some of our airmen in England, did it not? We Germans are very orderly, but we too can have our feelings roused.'

Sly digs, delicate little pokes, never missed. It was best not to answer him at all; but his manner angered Alan, and he found himself answering, and then . . . there was a chink and through Lissow slid. All the time the Sneak was listening, his eyes glinting behind his spectacles, picking up points.

'I'm fond of England,' Lissow went on. 'I know your literature, your countryside. I had many friends there. I hope to revisit them after the war. When I think of what has become of you now, I regret it. I do not think Englishmen comprehend what they are fighting for. You are easy-going and easily deceived.'

'Do Germans comprehend?'

'We have a very clear idea indeed. We are united. Europe is united with us.'

'Including Italy?'

Lissow shrugged his shoulders.

'Yes, I am sorry about England,' he said. 'It seems strange to us that a country like England should make an alliance with Bolshevism. You do not understand its true character. Had you lived in Germany twelve years ago, you would have understood.'

This was his official line. The Russians were the villains. The English were merely stupid blunderers who had deluded themselves into an alliance with those who would destroy them. They were selling Europe to Bolshevism and their Empire to America. The Americans were governed by Wall Street Jews; their soldiers

were negroes, gangsters and mental deficient. The Russian armies were the embodiment of savagery directed by cynicism. Poor England. Every day the German newspapers drummed it in. There was an undernote of envy for the little island which had got away with it again. The Germans still admired the English and thought them fiendishly clever and self-interested.

The propaganda was very skilful. It had as its chief aim the separation of England and Russia. There was something in it for everybody. Every latent hatred and suspicion of each nation, race, or profession had been sounded, and a separate note was struck with each. The Germans excelled in this kind of analysis. The newspaper articles were extraordinarily detailed. Once the violent bias had been taken into account, they seemed to be shrewd and accurate. They dissected the whole world without understanding it. Lissow liked to dissect the prisoners. In his office he was known to have dossiers of all of them. He read all their letters, incoming and outgoing. He knew their jobs, their family connexions, their anxieties, their prejudices. It was he who had chosen Colonel Anstruther to go to Budgronz. Anstruther was a business man, who had had dealings with the German business men before the war and liked neither Russia nor the communists; he was a suitable string to play upon. The whole castle was a game for Lissow as well as his job. He could have found his way round it blindfolded. He knew where all the secret entrances were; and the sites of all escapes, whether they had taken place in this or one of the previous two wars, whether they had succeeded or failed, were all marked on an enormous plan, with which he used to instruct his spies.

He talked to Alan for a little about the Russians, saying that they would destroy the 'bejewelled civilization' of Europe of which England was a part. He did not go on too long. He knew when to stop. The English were different from the Germans. With the Germans, the big drum banged repeatedly; with the English a few notes played as if by chance, now and then.

'Yes, you should work,' he said to Alan. 'Learn German. I will give you books. Already you don't speak badly. You

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should read Goethe and Schiller. I enjoy your English dramatists but I am disappointed in the plays you give in your theatre.'

'When you let us have it,' said Alan.

Lissow shrugged his shoulders.

'There are many good English plays,' he said. 'You should present Shakespeare.'

'I thought he was a German.'

'No, he was not a German,' Lissow said equably. 'He was an Englishman, but German critics were the first to appreciate him. I enjoy Shakespeare. Shaw too, I enjoy. We play Shaw frequently in Germany. Perhaps you will present one of his pieces?' He glanced at Alan sidelong and observed smoothly: 'Or perhaps it is too painful. Shaw understands the English. It takes an Irishman.'

They saw him later in the court-yard. The searchers had found nothing of importance. To make a show and please the senior officers they had collected a haul of contraband which had nothing to do with escaping. They stood round the Commandant, Freiherr von Grednitz, who was showing off his authority. He knew that the prisoners were at the windows. His right hand went up and down like a conductor's baton, his small purple head jerked forward, and out came scraps of barking sentences. Treidfeld stood in front of him. Evidently he had done something wrong; he shifted from foot to foot and looked like a naughty schoolboy.

'Grednitz knows how to give a rocket,' said Brian Clyde. He admired the German army and felt many things in common with their serving officers.

'Grednitz is quite well dressed,' said Bill Franklin. 'Those boots are a damned good fit. Might have been made in England. How did he get stuck away in a Command like this?'

'Like all of them,' Alan said. 'He knows when he's on a good thing. He's probably got a pal at Dresden to keep him here.'

'D'you call this a good thing?'

'It keeps him away from the front.'

'I'd rather be at the front than cooped up with a creature like

Lissow,' said Bill Franklin. 'What was Lissow in civvy street? A bloody little bureaucrat, a counter jumper. After all, Grednitz is a von.'

'A what?'

'A von. He must come of a fairly good family,' said Bill. 'God knows what Lissow comes from.'

The prisoners pressed their heads against the bars. They were in a good mood. The search had been a failure and they liked seeing the Germans looking crestfallen and ridiculous and shouting at one another. Peter Wade and Fred Martin were imitating the Commandant. Treidfeld had gone red in the face. The German N.C.O.s edged away from him, gazing with abashed respect at the angry Grednitz. Lissow hung at Grednitz's elbow, enjoying the reprimand, and behind Lissow was the Sneak; in an earlier period they would have been the shadowy hangers-on of Italian courts, the conspirator and the poisoner, who followed where the favour was, and changed sides at the right moment. The Commandant shouted at Treidfeld, and above the Commandant would be a general in Dresden, and above him other generals in Berlin, and above them all the Leader, his hand going up and down, up and down, and shouting so loud that the echoes went right down the scale till it reached the people; and at the elbows of all, from the Leader downwards, were the spies, the watchers, the secret police.

After the court-yard was clear Brian Clyde came up to Alan and Tug.

'We've got to speed things up,' he said. 'There's something going on in the Kommandantur. They're getting suspicious.'

'Why do you think that?' asked Alan.

'Did you see those special searchers?'

'They only came in for the day. It's nothing new.'

'On the contrary,' said Brian, 'they're staying on. They're billeted in the village.'

'How d'you know?'

'Rudi told me.'

'What did you give him for it?' asked Tug.

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'Cigarettes.'

'I was talking to him,' said Alan. 'He didn't tell me.'

'Did you ask him?' Brian said.

'No. As a matter of fact I didn't think of it.'

'They've come here specially. There are going to be more searches. We've got to get off as quickly as possible.'

'I'm all for it,' said Tug. 'As soon as you like.'

'You and Jim have got to make up your minds this evening,' said Brian.

'All right.'

'And you'd better finish those maps off, Tug.'

'Very good, sir.'

Brian walked off to see Ford and Tug made a comic face at Alan.

That evening Alan waited for Jim in their bed-room. In the court-yard the prisoners were seeing Colonel Anstruther off. He wore his coat with the opossum collar and was smiling and saying good-bye, as if at the end of a house party. Peter Wade and Fred Martin glared at him from an upper window.

'Oily devil,' said Fred. 'Look at him. He might be going to stay with Hitler.'

'I shan't be surprised if he tips the sentry,' said Peter Wade.

The wicket gate opened and Lissow and the Sneak appeared. They were very polite with Colonel Anstruther and the Sneak carried his bag. He disappeared through the main gate, into the other world, and the prisoners turned back, still arguing whether he should have gone or not.

Alan looked out of the outer window, on the side facing Durham village. He could just see the edge of the wood, where it joined the river. Some British and French soldiers were down there, chopping faggots. The Frenchmen wore khaki trousers, jackets with steel buttons and berets. None of them did much work. A German sentry with a rifle lounged against a tree. The party appeared to be in charge of a young British corporal called Fisher. This soldier stood out from the others on *appel*. He was lithe and wiry with an alert expression, and Alan remembered

that Morshead and Litauer had spoken of him last night. Fisher put his hand in his pocket and a packet of cigarettes passed between him and the sentry. Commerce crossed the frontiers. Commerce, and sex . . .

'They used to bring girls in at some of the camps,' Rudi had said. 'It's different for you. You're officers.'

Commerce, and sex, and there was something else. He watched the soldiers with a sense almost of envy. The Frenchmen lifted a log and balanced it across a tree trunk. They held it at either end, while Fell and Fisher began to saw. They seemed to ignore the German. When they spoke to him, they treated him as a bit of a fool. There was some kind of understanding between them. Alan wondered what language they spoke; whatever it was, it was not his.

From the village the nostalgic singing of the Ukrainian girls who worked in the factory swirled up to the castle. He could just see them in a window, one of them with her legs bare and twined round the window post. In summer they sang morning and afternoon, but because of the cold he had not heard them for some days. He had thought they had finished for the year and had missed them. The singing rose in massive cadences like a Gregorian chant, harsh and powerful, and reaching out like the river, sinking like the sunset clouds beyond the hills, rising and falling abstractedly like his thoughts. He thought of the great invasion. Far away in the west the armies must be assembling. The day they were launched against the shores of Europe would be one of the great dates of history, like the birth of Christ, or the fall of Constantinople, or the Russian Revolution. And eastwards . . . it was eastwards that the song reached out, to the unknown saviours in their vast and unknown country, where they too were assembling and accumulating, to fetch home the singers and the prisoners. One night, he had imagined, he might wake up and see either of those armies, or both, pouring out of the hills and across the bridge, surrounding, engulfing the castle as the centuries surround a single date. He had imagined it like that, and perhaps now he would not be there to see it.

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Jim had come in.

'Well, Jim, are we going to toss?'

'Who's got a coin?'

'I haven't.'

'This'll do.' Jim took out a five centime piece and spun it in the air. Each of them moved forward a step, watching it gravely. For Alan this coin had suddenly a vague but immense significance. What were they doing? They had trusted their whole future to it.

'Heads,' said Jim.

It tinkled, rolled across the floor and lay under a table. Innumerable, unforeseeable events in their own lives and perhaps in the lives of others waited under it. Alan walked over and picked it up and looked at it. It was like taking the lid off the future.

'It's tails,' he said.

PART TWO

THE ESCAPE

(Two Weeks)

Two evenings later Brian, Tug and Alan are waiting in one of the first-floor rooms for the signal to go. Their packs are leaning against the wall, ready to be put on, and they have civilian clothes underneath their battle-dress. When the sentry in the court-yard moves out of sight, they will go downstairs. The rope is to be lowered and they are to go through the unbarred window into the guard-house.

Everything is rehearsed, and now more than thirty assistants, headed by Simon and Major Ford, are standing at doors, windows, in corridors, to pass on the signals and give them warnings. Brian walks up and down the room, goes out into the corridor, and asks the same question several times. He tries to keep his voice quiet, but Alan and Tug know from old the condition he is in. That morning he had been at his worst. While they were moving their kit from the hide another prisoner, who had nothing to do with the scheme, had obstructed them and Brian suddenly exploded. He cursed the man up and down and went red in the face. Now he had himself under control, but another outburst was possible. He had too little trust in other people and would have preferred to do everything himself; he had the fanatic's anger with those whose minds are not entirely occupied with his own idea.

The evening parade is over, the full moon shines occasionally through a heavily clouded sky, weather which suits their chances. At last the door opens and Larkin's pale domed forehead appears. 'O.K.'

They strap on their packs and go rapidly downstairs into the court-yard. The sentry has his back turned and one of the assistants is keeping him busy with conversation. The three of them only need thirty seconds to step into the recessed part of the court-yard alongside the guard-room.

Thirty feet above him Alan sees a spar emerging through the bars, directed by Harry Ferguson and Bill Franklin. The spar

wavers and swings a little this way and that, then comes to rest on the ledge of the guard-room window, where it is held. The rope drops, thudding against the wall. Brian seizes it, Alan and Tug hold it. Brian begins to climb. Nobody watches them. The black-out blinds in the court-yard are down. A few prisoners take their normal walk round the court-yard before going to bed. Three gramophones blare out symphonies.

When Brian breaks the window Alan thinks that everyone inside the guard-house and in the castle must have heard it. The pieces fall tinkling at his feet. Tug is already half-way up the rope. He puts his feet round it, takes a grip, and begins to go up. Larkin holds it steady. A black space gapes where the window had been, and as he pulls himself over the ledge he hears Harry Ferguson say: 'Good luck boys. It's going fine.' He drops quietly into an empty room in the guard-house, joining Tug and Brian. All three are breathing heavily. They close the window and Alan puts the camouflaged panel in the broken pane. He remembers to act deliberately, without hurry, so that he does not drop the drawing pins and lose them in the dark. The spar is withdrawn into Harry's window and the rope pulled up and in. Harry jerks his thumb up and grins. The first stage is over.

'Was the window easy?' he whispers.

'Yes,' says Brian. 'I only had to slip my hand round. As far as I can see there aren't any listening wires. Sit down somewhere and don't talk. Be careful where you sit. There's all sorts of muck lying about.'

Alan leans cautiously against the wall under the window. Tug's hands are busy above him, fixing a blanket over the panes, so that they can use their torch. His boots, muffled with two pairs of socks, rustle among shreds of glass that have fallen inward and Alan listens for alarms below.

'You can light up now,' Tug whispers to Brian.

A small yellow circle appears, probing the floor and walls, searching for the door. They are in a large attic with heavy wooden beams supporting a pointed roof. The floorboards are very loose and a white dust lies everywhere; once cement had

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been kept there. Tug sits down beside Alan, and they watch the yellow point of light as Brian gropes his way along the walls. It rises and falls, like a wasp in slow motion, and at last it settles on the door. Tug cranes forward and grips Alan's arm exuberantly.

'It's wooden,' he says.

'What about the lock?'

'Can't see yet. At the worst we'll be able to take a panel out.'

Tug had bet them both that if they managed the door they would get clear away.

The hooded light comes to rest on the lock, and Alan sees that the works are inside, and that it is one of the heavy square kind on which Brian has done most of his practice. Brian leans over it, tapping and gently prising. He pads back and puts the torch out.

'It'll be all right,' he says, almost cheerfully. 'It's not a cruciform.'

'Does the key fit?'

'No, but I can hold the spring up and slide it back. There's nothing to do except wait.'

'Oh boy, oh boy,' Tug says. 'How about my bet?'

'We're not out yet,' Brian says.

'I bet you we bloody well will be. Can we smoke?'

'I don't see why not. Keep your lighter well down.'

Brian is in a good mood again. Alan looks at his watch. Just past ten. The best time to go through the wire will be about one o'clock. The guard change at midnight, and by one o'clock the old guard will probably be asleep and snoring and the new guard for the two o'clock relief not yet awake. So they sit and wait. Alan begins to feel excited.

They hear the bugle sounding for the German lights-out. It has a call similar to the English call and reminds him of the Last Post he used to hear at home on night operations, reaching up to him from a barracks in a valley, years and years ago at the beginning of the war. For half an hour the gramophones still blare from the prisoners' quarters. He recognizes the oceanic symphony of César Franck, which people are always playing.

The music ends. The night is so still that they can hear the sentry on his beat inside, shifting round the court-yard, and sometimes a voice calling out in German. The clouds are good, but he wishes there is a gale blowing to drown their noise when they have to go through the wire.

Soon after midnight they creep behind Brian to the door. Alan holds the torch while he works away at the lock, steadily and skilfully. He gives a slight pull on the handle with his elbow and the door slips open. Nobody is moving below. Brian opens the door wider and they see the stairs descending as if into a well.

'One at a time,' he says.

They have planned that they will go straight into the guard-room and take up their next positions in an alcoved window. Half-way down the stairs Brian stops. A door has opened on the ground floor and they hear heavy boots in the stone passage, and then the jangling of keys. A door opens and clangs to. Alan sees the guard commander lit up under the searchlights.

'Who was it?' Brian whispers.

'Weinecke. He's doing his rounds. Do we wait here?'

'No. Follow me straight down.'

Their muffled boots make little sound on the stairs. When Alan reaches the bottom Brian has opened the guard-room door in the passage. Alan goes in after him. His heart is thumping. This is the boldest part of their scheme. The furniture is arranged as they expect it, with double-tiered bunks, five in all, along the walls and a table in the centre with chairs round it. Alan goes straight across to the deep window recess. Brian is already crouching there and Tug joins them; for once he does not knock into the chairs.

They listen without moving, checking their breath. Two of the sentries are snoring, and the straw rustles as they turn from side to side. The three prisoners can only be seen from the middle of the room, where a small lantern burns with a dying flame. The nearest bunk is not more than five yards away from them, round the corner of the alcove. They can see the endposts, but the sentries in it are sleeping with their heads the other way.

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The lantern on the table gives little light. Arc-lamps outside help them to see one another and to watch Brian's gestures. There is to be no talking. Brian looks at his watch and holds up his hand as a sign to wait, thinking of the guard commander. Five minutes. Ten minutes. Alan's crouching position gives him cramp. One of the snorers breaks off suddenly and begins to talk loudly and angrily. At the first words Alan's heart jumps, but it is only a nightmare.

The guard commander's footsteps on the gravel outside pass, and then return, after he has checked all the sentry posts. The next relief is due in little more than half an hour. Brian lifts his head cautiously and moves it from left to right, from right to left, his eyes level with the window. Then he slips the window back and begins to ease himself out.

He disappears. It is only a four foot drop to the gravel path and from there a few yards to a single fence of barbed wire. Alan holds the window back for Tug and lifts his pack, which catches in the window-ledge. Triumph bubbles up in him when he sees Brian already lifting the severed strands of wire and preparing to go through into the wood beyond. But as he lifts himself on to the window-ledge his pack catches the window and swings it with a bang against the wall. Someone inside the room moves. The bed-boards creak and a voice calls out, 'Who's there?'

He crawls across the gravel, certain that he has been seen, and expecting immediately to hear shouting and shooting, but he still remembers to take it easy. The severed wire has sprung back and caught Tug's trouser-leg. He disentangles it methodically and eases his own way through afterwards, without looking towards the sentry. Brian and Tug are away anyhow. This is the moment.

But nothing happens. They have made a clear break, all three of them, the kind that they had dreamt of. Whoever called out in the guard-room is too sleepy to bother about it, and Brian has cut the wire so neatly that the sentry on the path hears nothing. They slither down a steep bank, moist with rain and fallen leaves among the tree-trunks, until they reach the little stream. Here there is thick coiled Dannert wire, but no sentries watching it

and only an occasional visit by the guard commander and a dog patrol. Brian is well through by the time Alan reaches it; he hears Brian and Tug padding softly along the path that fringes the stream. Two hundred yards further on they climb the old castle wall and land on the free side in a kitchen garden, where a furious dog starts to bark, tugging angrily at its chain. They cross a road into wet meadows, where goats are pastured, and moving away from the town reach a bend in the river, where in summer Alan has often seen the German children bathing.

People who have grown accustomed to disappointments do not necessarily become pessimists. But usually they are more careful in assuming that all is well. So when Alan found himself doubling along the river bank, with the castle behind him and no shots fired, he did not cry out 'Free! Free!' and throw his cap in the air. He did not know whether the alarm had been given or not. The sentry outside might find the gap in the wire at once, or the dog might have woken up the owners of the house, who might have seen men running. A tow-path bordered the river-bank; the autumn rains had made it soggy, but a motor-cycle or cycle patrol could have gone along it without difficulty and fast. They were out of gaol, but not clear, and Brian was right to keep on running.

Alan's pack jogged up and down uncomfortably and the socks over his boots worked loose. Unwisely, he kicked them both off. After he had gone about a mile, meeting no one and hearing no one, the moon pulled out of the clouds and shone on the light steel girders of a small bridge. They crossed the bridge and left roads and paths behind. The harvest was over. They went across stubble fields and ploughland, which slowed them up; but Brian still kept about fifty yards ahead of Tug, and Tug the same distance ahead of Alan, as they had planned. Tug's loose and swinging shadow looked like the 'fearful fiend', striding across the world in pursuit of victims. Soon they reached meadows separated by low hedges, through which they could force their way if there was no gate near. A horse came lolling up to

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Alan and followed him some distance snorting. He began to be aware of the fresh air and the smells of the country, and thought less about pursuit.

He realized now that for the moment he was free and that, whatever came of this escape, something refreshing had happened to him. He had been so long without the plain unconfined life that its details were ten times more to be enjoyed now that he had them within reach. He would for a long while to come, perhaps for life, notice everything more keenly and find it easier to be absorbed away from himself. The stars and the moon, which he had never liked to watch through bars, were now not separated from him. There was a strong smell of manure in the fields, almost as good as a smell of cooking meat; and he felt all round him a natural and uncramped familiarity. The two or three farms they passed belonged to their enemies, who would receive a reward for handing them over; but the people asleep under their roofs possessed some of the normal liberties and comforts, and he preferred travelling amongst them than to being imprisoned with his friends.

After another mile they reached a single-line railway, which they intended to follow for the rest of the night. Brian stopped so that they could come up with him; and sitting under the shadow of the railway bank they got their breath and pulled off their military clothes, torn and muddled by the slide through the wood.

'How long do we have here?' Alan asked.

'Ten minutes,' said Brian. 'Get your breath back and pack up your battle-dress. We'll hide it all here together.'

Tug began to hum, but Brian stopped him.

'Well, boys, we've made it,' Tug said. 'Look at that place!'

Looking back along the valley, they saw the floodlit castle shining in the darkness like a diamond in the wall of a mine. Yes, it seemed to float, with a false seductive beauty, belying its true character. Alan picked out the turret in which he had lived and wondered what Jim Irving and Bill Franklin were doing at that moment. All the watchers must know by now that they had

got away. They would go back to bed wishing them luck; but the goodwill would be mixed with envy and a spasm of resentment. He had felt it himself, often, when someone else had escaped, and Jim and Bill would be feeling it now, Bill especially. It was not their fault. It was the castle's fault, injecting its poison into the heads of all who inhabited it, so that they could have no generous feelings which were not turned a little crooked or corrupt.

He had not understood until now how much, how fiercely he had longed to get away from it, wanting to rid himself not merely of the bars and the abysmal grey court-yard, whose walls seemed to close in, but, more than that, of the bickering and futility and gossip and the small whispering talk which was forced on those who lived there. They could not help it. They had become fussy and carping, worried about small details excessively, and unable to fling their imagination across the wire. This had been happening to him, and that was why he had had to go away. Had he stayed he would have become a real old man, and his spirit would have shrivelled up and died inside him. He looked at the castle's shining falsity again and rolled over, turning his back. He was never going back there, not for anything; no, never.

'Time's up,' Brian said. His voice grated. He had brought something of the castle away with him. He was so tense, so compressed. Surely they could be a little different now, and take it easy, instead of making a martyrdom out of the long journey that stretched ahead. It would be difficult and uncomfortable and Brian seemed to want to remind them of it. Alan wished that he and Tug were the only two, as they had planned originally.

They hid their battle-dress under a heap of stones. There was the railway-line, white in the moon for them to follow, a silver rope stretching both ways into infinity. They set off in the same order, with the same intervals between them. Alan started walking from sleeper to sleeper; they were unevenly spaced, and he took to the grass verge.

In a fortnight, if they were very lucky, they hoped to reach

the Swiss frontier, travelling during the day by the slow crowded trains, which were not searched, and walking at night. They would get some sleep during the day; whether morning or evening depended on the times of trains and their own feelings. On the first morning they hoped to catch a train leaving the small station of Lauendorf at 6.10. It was ten miles away, and they had a little over four hours to do it in. A larger station, Feldkirchen, a junction of two lines, lay between. Here the train service was better, but they knew that any alarm from the castle was always telephoned there and a watch kept. At Lauendorf, five miles further on, they would feel safer.

The unaccustomed exercise warmed Alan and his spirits rose and seemed to make him lighter. He thought already of the journey's end, the boat or aeroplane to England, the interview at the War Office, and finally the arrival on leave at the little station where he had said good-bye to Jeanne. Perhaps, since the fall of France, she might have come to England. Next time he met her he would be different, and she would be sure to recognize it. He would be a young man who had achieved something. Mrs. Willoughby Howarth would lionize him.

And after he had reached home, his mother's pride, and the celebrations. Then what happened next? Brian Clyde knew. His tough compact figure padded ahead, following the single track of the railway line to a single objective, his regimental depot. It seemed inadequate. A journey from one prison to another; what was the point? Already Alan felt the *Wanderlust*. He was ready to go anywhere. The war scarcely entered his mind. It would meet him at any point of the compass, and he preferred to come upon it somehow by accident, at random, rather than be steered back into it through the correct channels. He did not always want to be Lieut. Alan Maclaren, reporting for duty, sir, with a smart salute and a click of his heels; duty or no duty, that was not his line.

He felt ready for any kind of wild goose chase, and did not really mind whether he arrived home at once or not. Home was not a terminus, but a station; as soon as he alighted there, he

would be looking at the time-tables to see where he could go next. With a cheerful vagueness he thought of troubadours, beggars, tramps, people on their own and pursuing nothing clearly except independence. The miles went easily past and he saw the red light of a signal-box not far ahead.

Beyond was Feldkirchen, lit up to his astonishment as if in peace-time. As he went past the signal-box his steel-tipped boot knocked on a rail, and a man looked out of the window and roared at him. He walked on rapidly, and the shouting continued. He heard a whistle blown and imagined that the whole place was roused. Ahead of him Brian looked round and darted abruptly off the line; when Alan came up with Tug, who was hiding in a ditch, Brian had disappeared.

'The maestro's gone to reconnoitre,' Tug said. 'What happened?'

'I stubbed my boot. They seem to be on edge all right at this place. Do you think they've had a warning?'

'Might have. It doesn't matter. We can always go round it.'

'There was a damned rail lying across the path. Did you see it?'

'As a matter of fact I did. It's usually me that falls over these things.'

A stout official, in the blue uniform and peaked cap of the German railways, came puffing along the line from the station. He stopped a few yards from Tug and Alan to get his breath, pushing his glasses on to his forehead and mopping his head. They heard him cursing to himself, and lay still. But he walked on and shouted something to the signal-operator, who shouted back. They sounded angry with one another, but Alan knew from experience that this was their normal tone of conversation; he had still to meet a German who did not speak as if to a public meeting.

Brian returned.

'What happened?' he asked and they told him.

'It's no good here,' he said. 'They'll be on the watch in the station. There's some kind of a convoy going through. We'll have to go round.'

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'Is it a big place?'

'I don't think so. We'll have to go pretty quick though.'

He led them up a steep hill, stuck with formal residential villas, along a sandy path ending in a quarry. They scrambled up the sides, tearing their hands on bushes which they used for holds, and were confronted with dense wet undergrowth overlooking the town. Lights flashed along the lane they had just left and in the moonlight they saw that the ditch was being searched. They tried to force their way through the undergrowth, staying close together, and holding back the thorny tenacious branches. When they emerged they saw a main road curving to the hill-top and more villas, like rows of white teeth, studding either side. It meant a longer detour than they expected. Brian looked at his watch. The town and the main railway yard lay over the shoulder of the hill. The illuminated platforms, the red and green signals, and nosing lamps of engines gave Alan the impression that he had stumbled on a strange and guarded country, seldom visited. There was a great deal of movement and clanking among the lights, and shadows went to and fro swinging lanterns. Gasping and jerking a train drew in, tugging scores of squat yellow shapes on trailers. The convoy stretched behind the houses, out of sight.

'See them?' Tug said excitedly. 'They're a bit late, if they think they're going to Africa.'

The shapes were light tanks, camouflaged sand-coloured for the desert. The train bumped slowly through the brilliant station, hissing and cloudy with steam, like a golden dragon.

'No wonder they're nervous of strangers,' Tug said. 'There must be nearly a hundred of them.'

'Sixty-seven,' said Brian. 'Mark IV.'

'They must be going to Italy,' Alan said. 'Blast them. I suppose there's going to be a campaign there.'

For the moment Europe was facing south. The monkey-faced little King of Italy had hustled Mussolini into an ambulance van off his palace steps and the Allies were poised on the Straits of Messina. In England and America people spoke of reaching the

Brenner in a few weeks. The German newspapers poured out wild recriminations against the shameful Italian betrayal. The Germans seemed to have taken much the same attitude as the British had taken about the fall of France, resigned self-satisfied contempt, with a touch of anxiety: 'Just what we expected. Well, now we know where we are,' the solid Anglo-Saxon contempt for the frivolous Latin. And the golden convoys, once intended for the lost desert and lost Tunis, were clanking southwards day and night into the Apennines.

'If only we could jump them!' Tug exclaimed. 'What about it, Brian? It'd take us the whole way. We might even go on to Italy. How's that for an idea?'

Brian considered it. He lay under cover on his belly, staring covetously at the yellow tanks, symbols of his existence.

'It's no good,' he said. 'We'd never be able to conceal ourselves.'

'We could get inside.'

'They're bound to be clamped down. Besides . . . look . . . they're being searched now.'

The train had stopped in the station and the shadows with lanterns were walking slowly along the trailers, examining each tank.

'It's no good,' Brian said. 'We'd never get anywhere. They make the hell of a fuss about these convoys. It's not like England. You might get away with it there.'

They moved on reluctantly.

'I'd like to have tried it,' Alan whispered to Tug. 'You never know.'

'So would I. Think of it! Banging through the Brenner in a panzer. It's the sort of thing you read about in books. It's the sort of thing that *does* happen.'

'*Does* happen,' thought Alan, 'but not apparently to me.' He remembered their dynamic little commander's speech just before they had landed in Norway, and how he had pictured himself ruling vast tracts of arctic land with a band of faithful desperadoes. How does it happen? Who are the people who do these things?

'I suppose the maestro's right,' said Tug ruefully. 'He's always right. Come on, take up your cross. Only two more weeks.' Alan felt indignant with Brian for having so much common sense. He and Tug would have tried it; probably they would have been caught, but at least they would have tried it.

For a quarter of an hour they lost themselves in a web of streets. Their boots rang on pavements and the usual dogs barked. When they regained the single-line they had only an hour and a half to spare. The detour had put them so far behind schedule that Brian set a rapid pace, not troubling to deaden the noise. Alan's pack chafed his shoulders. A tin inside worked loose and continued to rattle, but he had no time to stop. His vest stuck clammy to his sweating back and he felt a constriction above his heart. The vein of rancour which life in the castle had opened in him continued to flow against Brian. Brian was fussy. Brian was rigid, obstinate, a bad companion. He even hoped that they would miss the train, so that Brian might be shaken out of his stilted composure.

Night faded and opened, and morning pressed steadily through the wound. Banks of amethyst and primrose stretched along the sky, low down, just touching the hills, and to their left. A thick river-mist rose; far along the line, like a sketch half rubbed out, they saw the farm-houses and church-tower of Lauendorf. At six o'clock the railway line began to shake and throb. Alan turned round and saw the train. All three of them moved off the line, accepting the inevitable. They watched it pass. The smoke halted and billowed over the roofs more than a mile ahead of them. The train went on, and the stillness of the autumn morning closed behind it. Brian looked morose; the other two were more cheerful, expecting something to turn up.

'Well,' said Tug. 'That's that. When's the next one?'

'The time-table's a year old and to-day is Sunday,' Brian replied. 'It says the next one goes at 10.15. You can't trust it, though. The Sunday trains are always being changed.'

'We can have a rest, anyhow.'

They moved into cover in a plantation of beeches, took off

their packs, and spread ground-sheets on the wet grass. One edge bordered the river, and the mist clung like sweat to the damp leaves. Alan lay flat on the bank and, cupping his hands, drank too long and too fast, so that for an instant the world went black and he felt dizzy. Tug leant with his back to a tree, stretched his legs, and lit a pipe.

'We've got out of the castle, anyhow,' he said. 'That was the main object.'

Brian was worrying the time-table.

'I'd better go into Lauendorf and see if this train is right,' he said, almost to himself.

'Why don't we all go in?'

'Too suspicious, if we have to hang about. It's only a small place.'

'We could wait in the church,' Alan said.

'Might not be open.'

'Churches are always open on Sunday,' Tug said blandly.

They waited while Brian made up his mind.

'Yes, we'll do that,' he said. 'We'll stay here till nine o'clock. I'll go to the station and you two meet me at the church. That gives us three hours waiting here. I'll do the first watch. Tug, will you do the second? And Alan the third.'

'Do you think it's necessary?' Tug said. 'We've got pretty good cover. One of us is sure to be awake.'

'It's as well to make certain,' Brian said dryly. And there was nothing to add.

The mists dissolved as the white sunbeams pierced them and fell in shining slants between the trees. The sun changed from a puff ball into a dandelion, then into a sunflower, and as it rose and deepened light poured steadily across all the country, strengthening it and binding it together. Ploughlands, grass, fields of stubble, here and there a corner still unharvested, stretching to the extreme edge of forests of firs. Trees lay felled across one another like golden ingots; everywhere was work, everywhere was cultivation, intense and unyielding.

Smoke rose from chimneys. Some of the cottages were new,

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but they had been built to match the old timber, so that they did not disturb the deeply settled landscape; even the more expensive villas at Feldkirchen had been neat and unpretentious and did not offend. An empty cart with those ribbed sloping sides, drawn by oxen, climbed a winding road and turned off into the fields. A farmer with a stiff green hat took off his coat and hung it across the yoke. About the time the prisoners would be slouching off their first parade, and Jim Irving fetching their black coffee from the cookhouse, a woman came out into a back-garden and threw grain to the hens. She looked at the weather and returned to hang out washing. Alan wondered idly if she had kept it in the house overnight or risen to wash it before the dawn. He wanted to know the details of these lives and wished he could have lain back there in the sun all day, observing, conversing, associating, eating the three-weeks' food stored in his pack, until evening came and he would go indoors to a fire and a square meal.

He undressed and laid his sweat-soaked underclothes in the growing sun. He dried himself and changed his socks. Then he sat alongside Tug in his shirt and trousers, refreshed and light-hearted, his spitefulness against Brian gone, and thought back on their good luck.

'I thought that Hun who woke up had seen us,' he said.

'When was that?'

'Just as I was getting out of the window.'

'Oh! in the guard-room. I heard a noise. I was stuck in the wire at the time. Sometimes I wish I was half my size.'

'What size are you?'

'Six foot three. Most of it's my legs. You're not so small.'

'Six foot.'

'For a short-arsed little fellow, Brian keeps up a pretty good pace. He must be pretty fit.'

'He used to get up and do exercises every morning before parade, back in the castle. He walked round the court-yard twenty times every evening.'

'I wish I had. I felt pretty puffed that last bit. I was afraid

old Brian was going to start running. I thought I should have packed up.'

'I certainly should have,' said Alan, laughing, glad that someone else had felt bad. But he didn't say anything about his dizziness by the river. Anyhow it didn't matter. He felt fine now.

His clothes were not dry when they set off for Lauendorf at nine o'clock; but it was no distance and he minded less the clamminess against his back. A silver chime striking the hour, and the stronger chimes swinging in immediately after, called the people to morning service. The church was very plain and austere, beautiful in that way; Alan supposed that it had been built some time in the Middle Ages. Its tower ended in a tiled point, like a witch's hat, with a weathercock motionless on top and shining in the sun. Brian left them, and they went inside.

They took a pew at the back and knelt down piously, putting their faces in their hands. The church was as severe inside as outside. A plain wooden cross stood on the altar and there were no images, no carvings on the pews or pulpit. Sunlight deepened the deep rose and olive and apricot fragments of the stained glass. The people entered, the women with shawls over their heads, the men with dark suits, and black cravats tucked underneath stiff white collars. Nearly all were old, the last generation, even the generation before, and weather and hard work had bitten deep lines into their grave faces; they, like the sentries, stepped alive from the drawings of Albrecht Dürer.

They scarcely looked at Tug and Alan, and Alan felt that for the moment at least nobody would molest them. The congregation, in all not more than fifty, stood waiting for the pastor to enter, patient as cattle. The organ began to play softly; and abruptly, without announcement, rose the solemn measures of one of the old Lutheran hymns, which the people must have known by heart, for they sang it without books. The strong devout voices and the great notes stirred memories of childhood; they brought to mind the exiled singing of the factory girls under the castle, and something enduring, unassailable, springing from

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the soil and from the seasons, which induced him to forget the grief or promise of his own time. He sat back, and closed his eyes.

II

DURING the next three days, by trains and on foot, they made over a hundred miles southwards. The weather had gone back. The sun rose white and chilly among mists at dawn; but by midday, when they usually slept, it was still hot enough to bask and imagine summer. They found themselves hideouts in woods and undergrowth, which they made thicker by tearing off branches and piling them on top of one another. There they lay until evening, one of them watching, the others asleep, like animals. The watcher had the extra duty of stopping Tug's snores, which could be heard at some distance.

The best of these afternoons they spent in a big orchard, belonging to a timbered farm-house with a stream running past it. They had just left the train to find that the woods marked on their maps were not there, and no thick cover visible for miles. They crept between the hedge and ditch that lined the orchard, and spreading their raincoats on the muddy bottom hoped that nobody would come. They saw many people, but were not disturbed. Curiosity and caution kept Alan awake even when he was not watching. There was no wind, but over-ripe apples fell lazily from the trees and, like a god, he had only to reach out a hand to pull them in; they ate some and stuffed their packs with the rest. The road was on the far side of the orchard; the heads and shoulders of passers-by could be seen above a fence; several in uniform, a pastor in a black gown with white tabs, and the ubiquitous women in mourning, who stood gossiping for half an hour like rooks. In the house a woman's voice called out and he saw her moving from window to window, changing linen; always a little nearer to life than he had been in the castle. Towards evening an old man came out and sat on a garden seat with a newspaper, which he folded and

placed on his knees, staring vacantly in their direction. Perhaps he was thinking of the news from south-west Russia; the tremors of serious alarm, begun at Stalingrad, were multiplying. Evening fell slowly; the passers-by became fewer; pigeons came home to roost; someone in the house began to practise the piano; and the travellers disengaged themselves from the briars and set out again at nightfall.

They had the accidents and close shaves familiar to all like them. People looked at them suspiciously on the roads at night, and in the trains they had to avoid conversation. Brian was far the least conspicuous, wearing blue trousers and a light brown wind-cheater; and carrying a much-used brief-case; his papers were those of an engineer, German, travelling to the headquarters of his firm at Augsburg. Tug behaved in a thoroughly carefree way, and they had to warn him; in a crowd of orderly Germans, who sat stiff and erect on the wooden seats, he stuck out his long legs, shoved his hands in his pockets, and went to sleep. Alan saw people looking at him and whispering complaints; so he put together his best German, tapped Tug on the shoulder, and pointed to an official notice: 'At Home there must be Politeness and Unselfishness; think of the Soldiers at the Front and not of Yourself.'

'Pull your legs in, can't you?' he said. 'You're not the only person in the carriage.'

Tug woke up with a sudden grunt and nearly replied in English. He tucked his legs under the seat and the Germans nodded approval at Alan. 'Some people don't realize there's a war on,' one of them said. Afterwards Brian remonstrated:

'What the hell did you do that for? It might have given the whole show away.'

'If I hadn't somebody else was just going to. You know Tug can't speak a word of German.'

'H'm. Well, I think it would have been better not to do it.'

On the third afternoon they lay up among shrubbery at the foot of a small slope. Alan was watching when a little girl appeared over the rise above them and started playing with a

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ball. It was a large red ball made of rubber and she was bouncing it above her head and calling to someone on the other side. Alan thought: if she drops it this side, it will roll down the slope and nothing can stop it coming into this hide. So he kicked the other two awake, and sure enough she dropped it. The three of them watched it, mesmerized, as it trickled towards them and came to rest, pursued by the little girl, against a branch immediately in front of Alan. She had an almost white pigtail and large blue eyes, which froze with horror when she saw him. She gasped and without picking up the ball or saying a word scrambled back up the hill. They grabbed their packs and disappeared to a new hiding-place.

They felt the encouragement of the hunted. Often it was like a holiday; an eccentric holiday of three men who had grown tired of one another and walked for preference in file and at night. It had its merits, being an outcast, not belonging; seeing people, whose liberty they had so much envied, as they were in their disciplined communal life, Alan's desire to be reinstated in society weakened. He walked along happily in the cold nights; what he would have liked would have been to speak to the men and women when he wanted to, but not to be committed to them. He was turning into a vagabond.

Both he and Tug wanted to get rid of Brian, and they guessed that he felt the same about them. They did not dislike one another. Not at all. They 'respected', 'valued', and the rest of that, but they were incompatible and ought to have known it before they started. His grimness put a strain on them, and their lightheartedness on him, and there were no meeting points of sympathy and not many even in action. They always took the line of least resistance, letting him lead his own way. He was very useful too. He took the tickets at stations. His past experience in escaping, much greater than theirs, had taught him a lot about German habits and regulations, so that several times he saved them from blunders. Usually he walked ahead. They imagined him on his exacting journeys before this one, padding with indefatigable solid steps through Poland, through the

Balkans, almost once to the Golden Horn, watchful and resolute, growing too much used to every man's hand against him, a kind of Cain. Sooner or later they were bound to separate.

On the fourth night they lost their way, and for once in a while it was Brian's fault. Their next stop was Wasserlindau, and they thought the road went dead straight. But they were off their local maps by now and on to the small-scale maps, so that it wasn't surprising to come suddenly on a fork-road they knew nothing about. It had no signpost. Both roads started off in much the same direction. They looked behind them at the Pole Star, set compasses, lit matches over their maps, argued it out. None of this told them anything. Tug had a hunch.

'I think it's left,' he said.

'Why?' Brian asked.

'No reason. I just think it's left.'

'I'm pretty sure it's right. We're supposed to be on a main road, and the road to the left's smaller. The last two cars have gone right, if that means anything.'

'That's all very sound. You're probably right. All the same, I've got a hunch it's left.'

Alan suggested asking someone, and they waited a quarter of an hour, skulking like highwaymen, but nobody came. Few Germans ever seemed to be about at night. They worked hard all day and then slept, exhausted. The wakers were the armies and the night shifts in factories. Sometimes lorries roared past, occasionally a cyclist; that was about all.

'Well,' said Tug, 'what about tossing for it?'

'If you're so sure it's left, we'd better go left.'

'I've no evidence. You've got evidence. We'd better go right.'

So they went right for two miles, and it turned out to be left. For the road they took turned far out of their course and they knew they must be mistaken. Brian was for turning back to the fork, but Tug had another hunch.

'There must be a connecting road,' he said. 'Let's go on a bit.'

And so there was. It took them to a signpost and when Tug saw on it 'To Wasserlindau, 6 kilometres' he slapped Brian on

the back. 'Well, me old cocksparrow,' he said. 'What about me as a prophet now? Star-gazing, fortune-telling, water-divining, anything you like.'

'It *should* have been right,' Brian said. 'Anyhow, we've not wasted much time.'

No, he was not going to admit he had made a mistake.

'Come on,' he said. 'We've got to go fast. It's nearly morning.'

'You've offended him now,' Alan said to Tug later, when they were lying up in the morning sun, waiting for Brian to come back from a reconnaissance. 'He hates having things done for him like that.'

'I can't help my bump of locality. I'll suppress it, if you think that'd be more diplomatic.'

'We've got to unfreeze Brian somehow.'

'You're telling me. You're better at it than I am. I always put my foot in it. Talk to him about his brother. He's a bit more human then.'

They discussed Brian in low voices, stopping guiltily when he came up to them. If he was conscious of the strain between them, he did not show it, and would not have cared. Most personal relationships were merely a necessity to him, a factor in a military appreciation, usually a delaying factor. What he demanded was a practical solution. Only very rarely, talking about home, and especially about his younger brother, did he allow a wintry sun of humanity to emerge. Evidently they had been inseparable. They lived in Hertfordshire, where his father had retired on returning from India. It was easy to imagine the family as Brian spoke of them; his mother's father and brother also soldiers, getting themselves exiled to distant stations, perhaps killed, and now her sons. His own mother was quite different. She wanted to hold him, scheming for it all the time. The mothers of people like Brian expected separation and tried to make their paradise out of childhood and boyhood, knowing it would not last. Alan's mother was always asking him not to escape, in her usual negative manner: 'You must make up your

own mind, dear, of course, and it must be terribly depressing in that castle; but after all, you have done your duty, and the war can't go on for ever.' Brian's mother could never have written such letters. She expected him to escape; she expected, after two world wars and several local campaigns, never to know whether her male relations were alive or dead.

In their holidays she used to take them all to Norfolk. Brian and Peter went sailing on the Broads. They knew an island off the east coast where they used to lie for hours watching and photographing the birds, getting up before dawn and walking out to it at low tide across the sands. Brian's dour face lightened and softened as he spoke, until at last you could say, so he is human, he can relax, he has spent long periods doing nothing of significance; and at such times he was more willing to listen to other people. He was proud of his brother and showed Alan photographs of him in the desert. Peter had been through all the campaigns since Wavell's first offensive; he was twenty-three and a major.

'I suppose I shall have to salute him,' Brian said, smiling morosely. Alan felt sorry for him. Somehow he would thaw the ice.

They expected to find a hide beyond Wasserlindau, but this time there was nowhere at all: a treeless landscape, nothing but harvested fields in undulations, flowing into the clear sky, and a few large farms amongst them. The farms had barns, and the barns were places to hide, if they could find nothing better. They struck off the main road at once, taking a sandy path between the fields, not certain where they were going and anxious about the rising light. A railway stretched in front, taking the branch line from Wasserlindau to the main line connexion with Bayreuth and the south, and a gaunt file of pylons marched diagonally across it. They came to a gravel-pit, where rusty iron rails were lying about, part of a disused siding. Pools of water stagnated in the hollows and thistles sprouted on the banks. A large poorly dressed woman, about thirty years old, was working in the pit alone, lifting the heavy rails and laying

them beside the path. When she saw them a hundred yards off, she stopped working and stared at them. She lounged to the path and stood there with her hands on her hips. She wore clogs and her bare legs were splashed with mud from the gravel-pit. She had a grey drab dress, more like a sack than a dress, pleated at the waist, with a white handkerchief tight round her head.

'You're not German, are you?' she challenged them.

'What do you mean?' Brian asked. 'What's it got to do with you?'

'You needn't pretend with me. Where are you going?'

'It's not your affair.'

Her biceps showed through a rent in the sleeve; she looked as strong as a horse, as tall as Brian and almost as broad. Alan noticed the rail she had been carrying; it would have been heavy even for a strong man. She looked at them arrogantly, with a desire for friendliness underneath; when she saw Tug she chuckled.

'He's no German,' she said, throwing out her hand derisively. 'I'd say you were English. American maybe. More like English. I've seen them.'

'What are you?' Brian asked.

'Polish.'

He spoke to her in Polish and she smiled and turned to answer him, with a side-glance now and then at Tug. When she looked at Alan, he had the impression Jeanne had given him at Mrs. Howarth's, of being sized up, and having nothing on, as if on a weighing machine. It made him feel ridiculous, and he looked away.

Brian talked to her for some time.

'She's all right,' he said. 'She lives on one of the farms. She says there's a barn there where we can stay till to-night. I reckon we'd better do that.'

'Suits me,' said Tug, grinning at the Polish woman.

'I come soon,' she said in English. 'I come at five o'clock,' and she held up five fingers and laughed. She turned back into the gravel-pit and they went on along the path.

'What were you jabbering about?' Tug asked Brian. 'You seemed to be getting on pretty well. She's not bad, is she?'

'She was telling me about the farm. It's that one.' He pointed out a low building with many outhouses, half a mile away. 'It's the barn this side. She says there's only one woman in the house, and she'll be busy. The men are all out. There's a loft no one's likely to go into to-day.'

'Any chance of any grub?'

'There's some up there. She said she'd try and bring us some soup this evening.'

'Oh boy! Did you tell her who we were?'

'She'd guessed already. It was you chiefly. Alan and me would pass.'

'Always me. What's wrong with me?'

'You just look English, that's all.'

'Is that all?'

'More or less.'

'Come on, Brian. What else did she say?'

'I'll tell you later.'

They sat down on a bank not far from the farm and one by one infiltrated into the farm. It had a big slushy yard, where pigs and hens were rooting about in manure; it seemed to be deserted. There were stalls in the barn, all of them empty, and a ladder leading through a trap-door into the loft.

'Look at this! Just look at this!' whispered Tug excitedly, pulling Alan through the trap. 'There's enough food to last us a bloody month. Apples. Spuds. Take your pick.'

It was a big room, like the attic through which they had escaped, with small cobwebbed windows high in the walls and the sky showing through chinks in the roof. A loose pyramid of apples filled one corner, wrinkled and russet, just picked. The potatoes were in six sacks. At one end hung a canvas partition and behind it was a plank bed.

'Do you think she sleeps here?' Tug said, casually.

'Doesn't look like it. There aren't any blankets. Didn't she say no one comes up here?'

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'These spuds look like a bit of black market,' Brian said. 'They're not supposed to keep any private stocks above what's necessary. They can't want all this lot. Or the apples.'

'Fair game, anyhow?'

'I reckon so.'

They unpacked their kit, took off their boots and stretched themselves. After that they put as many of the potatoes as they could take into the bottom of their packs; the apples went into the inside flap-pockets of their raincoats. They moved into the alcove behind the hanging, had some chocolate, biscuit and apples, and went to sleep in turns. A little after five they heard a noise in the barn and the woman appeared, carrying a large bowl of vegetable soup with a wooden ladle. She sat on the bed, her legs apart, and watched them eat. Her legs were still bare, but she had washed off the mud and put on a pair of old black shoes. She had taken off the white handkerchief, so that her black hair, with a few streaks of grey in it, fell to her shoulders, and her lips were made up. She did not appeal to Alan, although more than when he had seen her in the fields. She sat there, watching them eat, her hands on her knees, powerful and challenging. He thought that if she was married she would have an enormous family.

'Hungry, aren't you?' she laughed.

'I should say so,' said Tug. 'I could manage two of these.'

'What time do you have to leave?'

'What time, Brian? It's only a short walk to-night. One o'clock. Let's get a proper sleep.'

'Better start at midnight.'

'Make it one.'

'No,' said Brian irritably. 'Midnight.'

She glanced quickly at Tug, seeing how he took this tone of Brian's, and Alan thought Tug winked. She had probably divined the relationship between the three of them. Brian interested her, because he spoke her language; no other reason.

'I'll wake you at midnight,' she said. 'I can bring you coffee.'

'Don't do that,' Brian said. 'We wake ourselves.'

'It's easy. I sleep little. Over there, in the other barn. When Vanda worked here we slept in here. Now I sleep the other side.'

And she looked directly at Tug, inviting him there. Once or twice she glanced at Alan, comparing him, but without much interest. Tug was the one she wanted. Vaguely trying to compete, out of vanity more than desire, Alan said to her:

'What part of Poland do you come from?'

'South-east. Near Cracow.' She nodded at Brian, switching willingly from broken German into Polish. 'He's been there. Twenty miles north of Cracow. We had a farm.'

'Yes, I was there. In 1941.'

'It's beautiful, isn't it? This is beautiful too, parts of it,' and she jerked her head to the country outside. 'But it's better than this.'

She went on in a soft voice, uttering the tumbling language with now and then syllables of strong emphasis. In the early days of imprisonment Alan had met numbers of the conquered whom the Germans had taken from their homes and families. She had the look of many of them. In England it is called the faraway look, and people have it who are unhappy in an industrial society, thinking of dream-islands, dream-mountains, sailing round the world. A film seems to have been drawn over the eyes, so that they appear remote and abstracted, like a dog's that gazes too long into the fire.

She broke off and shrugged her shoulders.

'We could all talk many hours,' she said. 'There is no time. I must go now. It is past six, and they will be coming back. At midnight I will wake you.'

She took the empty bowl and the ladle and they heard her clogs clumping down the ladder. Soon there was a rattling in the yard outside and through a chink they saw the farmer returning, riding on a cart drawn by two roans. The cart was loaded with potatoes, giving Alan a twinge of anxiety, but the farmer drove it to another shed. A girl in a printed blue dress came from the house and uncoupled the horses, dropping the chains with a clatter on the cobbles. At once the horses threw up their heavy heads and lumbered into the barn below, where he heard

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their hooves striking on the stone. The girl came over to them with a pitchfork of hay. Later an older woman returned from another direction, this time with a cart-load of turnips pulled by two brown and white oxen; the oxen's legs were caked with dried mud, their flanks were glossy, and they were well cared for. The Polish woman appeared, helping the German woman to unload the turnips and uncouple the chains. She worked impassively, without speaking, and the Germans paid no attention to her. When it was almost dark, the young girl shooed the chickens into their pen and the farmer padlocked all the sheds and barns. The animals below made an occasional sound, trampling the stone. The air in the dark loft grew colder and in the high window a plantation of stars sprouted, one by one.

'Well, we're locked in,' Brian said. 'I don't like that. I wish she'd told us. I never expected that. How are we going to get out?'

'She said she'd wake us. Besides, there's a window downstairs. She'll come all right. I suggest we have a good sleep.'

'One of us must stay up.'

'Oh, for God's sake, Brian. Can't you trust her?'

'We can't trust anyone. I've been caught that way before.'

'She's given us food, she's shown us somewhere to hide, and you yourself said she was all right.'

'If you're tired, you can go to sleep. Alan and I'll watch.'

'I'm not tired. It's not that. Oh, have it your own way.'

Alan guessed what he was thinking. In order to help, he asked: 'Which watch do you want to take, Tug?'

'I don't mind,' he said surlily. 'The first'll do. Which do you want?'

'I'll take the second. Will the last suit you, Brian?'

'O.K. You wake me.'

Brian pulled some sacks over his legs and lay down on the plank bed, while Tug leant moodily against the apples and Alan scribbled his diary in the moonlight that slanted across the loft like a flying buttress and made goblin shapes in the dark corners. For a long time neither of them spoke. Outside a slight wind

whispered, the first since they had escaped, foretelling a change in the weather, and clouds must have gathered across the moon, for the moonbeam suddenly collapsed. The sound of Brian's breathing reached them. This was the moment Alan had been waiting for.

'He's asleep,' he said.

'I wish he'd stay asleep. He makes such a fuss about the whole business. We're getting on all right, aren't we? Why the hell can't he leave us alone? He won't trust . . . oh, well, he's probably right,' Tug broke off bitterly.

Alan put his diary away. 'I'll do your watch,' he said. 'I'm not sleepy.'

'It doesn't matter.' All the same, Tug's voice sounded hopeful.

'Go on. Don't be a fool. You can get out of the window.'

A smile like a sun out of a cloud came out of the gloom. 'You're pretty sly, I must say. Are you sure you don't want to go?'

'She's not my type. She seemed pretty keen on you.'

'If you mean it, I won't refuse it. For God's sake, be careful of Brian.'

He lifted his bulk and lowered himself through the trap, and Alan heard the window softly opened.

Everyone was happy. Brian presumably dreamt of escapes and returning to his regimental mess. Alan himself was alone, alone as he had not been for many months. In the castle there had been no privacy. But now there was no one, only Brian asleep behind the canvas curtain. He lay back in a heap of straw, gazing at the black star-spangled patch of sky. Whether he dreamt or dozed, it seemed to have become elastic, expanding and contracting according to his moods, a gigantic heart with millions of stars beating inside it like millions of human lives. It closed in, as the court-yard had seemed to close in, and he recoiled in dread of stifling; and then it spread outward and away, enlarging and receding like the frontiers of a virgin country, luring him restlessly on, and he knew that inside him an uncovering and unfolding had begun. He felt suddenly a

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passionate exuberance for it. He was so excited that he walked softly up and down the loft. He forgot to look where he was going, stumbled over a rake, and knocked it down with an appalling clatter. He stood stock still. The bed in the corner creaked and Brian's head poked through the curtain.

'What was that?' he whispered.

'Sorry. I knocked something over. I think it's all right. Sorry to wake you.'

'What's the time?'

'Half-past nine.'

'Half-past nine! Where's Tug, then?'

'He's gone downstairs to piss.'

Alan's heart sank as Brian got up, pulling a sack round his shoulders.

'I can't sleep on those planks. I'd rather be outside.'

'Try in here. The straw's very comfortable. I don't want it.'

'I think I'll sit up. Want a cigarette?'

'No, thanks.'

Brian lit up, shading the match, and Alan racked his wits for some dodge to send him off again. The stub burnt down and Brian tapped the ash into his palm and put it in his pocket.

'Tug's a long time,' he said.

'Yes.'

'When did he go?'

'Oh, a minute or two ago.'

Silence.

'It's a long time for a piss. I'd better get him up,' said Brian. 'I don't like him down there.'

'He's probably looking at the horses or something.'

'What the hell for? Besides, it's dark.'

Brian lifted the trap an inch. 'Tug!' he said softly. 'Tug!' He lifted it higher and called again. There was no answer, and he went down.

'There's no one there,' he said grimly. 'And someone's opened the window. What happened?'

'Damned if I know. Probably he's gone into the yard.'

YES, FAREWELL

miserable for three days and nights. They had to choose between sleeping with their raincoats either over them or above them, and they were damp both ways. They made wigwams, which kept out some of the water, but even when they found another barn or a shed they had nowhere to dry their clothes. Alan's four handkerchiefs turned into soggy puddings; he sneezed morning, noon, and night, developed rheumatism in his wounded leg, and probably had a temperature over 100. During the walks he felt faint and they had to rest longer, at more frequent intervals. Tug insisted on carrying his pack and made ludicrous attempts to nurse him.

With the trains, however, they made good going and after a week were due east of Nuremburg, in the wooded hills near the source of the river Main, not quite half-way to the Swiss frontier, and only a day behind schedule.

High winds swept away the rain and Alan's fever went. The sun came out again, shining fitfully through driving grey-blue clouds, and thudding gusts swung the light in radiant trapezes and lassos, catching the scattered farms and churches in bright nooses, ruffling the rising streams and chasing shadows across the hills like antelopes. The wind had come to stay, chilling their feet at night, but invigorating them when they were on the move. The hope of success came alive, making them less cautious. Brian had gone and they could kid themselves that they were on holiday. They walked together instead of in file. Before, they had never dared to light a fire, but now, whenever they stopped under cover and could find dry branches, they cooked their bully beef and the raw potatoes they dug up in the fields, and wished they had brought something to make a drink. They began to enjoy themselves. Tug was open-hearted and impulsive, and Alan expanded in his company, talking about home and what they were going to do when the war ended.

'What'll you do if we get home?' he asked one night. They were on the main autobahn to Augsburg. Far off to the east, possibly over Nuremburg, an air raid had begun. Long white flashes suffused the clouds and the ground trembled.

THE ESCAPE

'When we get home, you mean,' said Tug.

'All right, when.'

'I've had a hunch about this trip ever since we started. I felt as certain as I've ever been about anything that I was never going back to that bloody castle. I looked at it when we were on the railway and something almost said aloud to me that I'd finished with it.'

'I hope it's as good as your other hunches.'

'It's funny, I've had several in this war and they've all come true. I knew in France in 1940 that I wasn't going to get killed. And the other times I escaped, I never had much confidence. This time it's quite different. That woman put me in a good mood.'

Alan asked something that had been worrying him.

'Wasn't it a bit of a risk? I mean, disease. She didn't look particularly clean. I don't know, but . . .'

'Oh, I did all the necessary.'

Alan would have asked him more, but felt embarrassed. It angered him, still to be in this state of adolescence. It enabled men like Larkin to patronize him. 'Don't you worry,' Larkin had said once, in his grand manner. 'It's rather charming. Besides it saves trouble. Believe me, women are a labyrinth, most complex.'

'Do you like foreign women?' Alan asked Tug.

'I don't know. They're all much the same, seems to me.'

'I think I prefer foreign women,' Alan said, as if he had had hundreds of them, and hoping Tug would not take him up.

'I may get married,' Tug said. 'If I do, it'll be to an English girl.'

'You, married!'

'Why not?'

'Oh, it just seems odd.'

'I don't know what I'll do when we get back,' Tug said. 'I wouldn't mind a scrap with the Japanese. They might send me out there.'

'We'd need a bit of training. I reckon we're pretty well behind

the times. That attack of fever gave me the hell of a shock, too. I've never gone down like that.'

'I didn't feel too good. Three years on a third-rate diet won't have helped any of us. We'll get it all back pretty quick, though. Think of a proper sit-down square meal. Simon was always jabbering about lobsters and game and what-not. I don't care a damn about quality. Give me quantity.'

'Same with me. Suet. Tarts. Beef and fresh vegetables. Cheddar cheese. That's what I'm living for.'

'Don't talk about it.'

Their mouths were watering.

The searchlights were up now, a moving pyramid feeling for the planes. They walked on, talking more softly in case night patrols or wardens were out.

'I shouldn't mind staying out East,' Tug said. 'I've never felt really at home in England. There's something cramped about it. I'd like to get back there for a bit, and see the pubs, and some of the old haunts, but I know I'd get restless soon.'

'What about a job?'

'Well, I've had a good many, and the best was out of England. That was when I was lumberjacking in British Columbia. That was the life. I'd like to go back there, just to get healthy again.'

'I'd like something of that sort.'

'I reckon you would. The place is stiff with Scotsmen. You're Scots, aren't you?'

'People always ask that. Only half. My father was. I've never lived in Scotland.'

'You always struck me as typical, in some ways. I don't know why. They seem to like Scotsmen in Canada more than us — Englishmen, I mean. They used to say Englishmen were soft. "Englishmen needn't apply" — you know they used to post that up sometimes when they had jobs vacant. I've seen it. It made me mad. Particularly as there was something in it.'

'The war may have changed their minds.'

'Hope so. There was a marvellous old Scotsman who put me up when I broke my leg. I broke it ski-ing, up by Prince Rupert.

THE ESCAPE

You ought to go there, Alan, if you ever get the chance. Or make the chance. You can be ski-ing one moment and bathing the next, all for nothing. I'd give a lot to be there now. Honest, I'd give five years off the arse end of my life. Who wants to be old, anyhow?'

'What happened when you broke your leg?'

'Oh, yes, I was telling you. This old boy was a mining engineer, or had been. He'd been up to Dawson and the Great Slave Lake and all those places prospecting. I don't think he ever did much good, because he was always complaining no one would grubstake him. He didn't care much. He was a rolling stone really, and I reckon that's why he took to me. He'd got a shack there, up in the hills behind Prince Rupert, and I was there a month, convalescing. Christ, we drank! I've never seen a man put it down like he did. He had a bell-pull above his head at supper, and when we'd finished one bottle he just gave it a tug and a girl brought in another. When he'd really got going, he used to quote reams of Burns's poetry. You know, "To a Louse," and "Bonny Doon," and a long one about two dogs. That was his favourite.'

'I know the one.'

'He knew it backwards. He used to stand up and spout it in broad Scots. I couldn't understand half of it. I'd like to hear it in plain English one day.'

'Give me a bottle of whisky and I'll do it.'

'That's a bet.' Tug thought for a little, and they covered half a mile before he went on: 'All the same, I don't think I'd like to live in Canada, apart from the country and the climate. They're very kind and hospitable and most of them are straight enough, but there's too much of that get-rich-quick business. They're never quite certain whether they're Americans or not, or so it struck me. They're a bit too dynamic for me, too. I'm as lazy as hell really. Australia's more my place. Lying on a beach all day in the sun and doing nothing.'

'Is that Australia?'

'Oh, I don't know. I get an idea of a place and build up a

picture of it. It's probably nothing like that. I was in one camp with a roomful of Australians and they struck me as pretty easy-going. They didn't bother. The Canadians were always finding out about things and being significant. I suppose that's a good thing. I do it myself, when I'm in the mood. The Australians didn't care a damn. People said they were rough. Rough! I'd rather them than some of the Englishmen I've met. As a matter of fact, they were very good-natured. They went to sleep and played poker most of the time. Yes, sir,' Tug said, putting on a mock American accent, 'I've formed a very favourable impression of Australia in prison.'

'What about New Zealand?'

'The finest fellow I've met in prison was a New Zealander. And he was a V.C., which may have made it harder for him. I reckon New Zealand must be a pretty happy unassuming country. Maybe a bit dull. But any of those places would do for me. Anything to get free from all that snobbishness in England. It gets me down. I don't know if you have much of it in your part of the world, but even in the castle I noticed it. People aren't themselves. I realized it first after I'd been to Canada. There's much less of it there. I didn't feel the same when I got home.'

Alan remembered the conversation he had overheard in the silence room between Marcus Litauer and Morshead.

'I noticed it sometimes at home,' he said. 'When I was in Norway I noticed it less. I was with a lot of people doing something. In the castle people were bound to be pretty abnormal. It was exaggerated there.'

'No,' said Tug sadly. 'It's the truth. You don't get a straight reaction out of folk. I just don't feel at home with them. What has happened? It goes through everything. I used to work in the North once. I didn't keep the job long. I never do. Do you know, they have separate bars there in some of the pubs, one for skilled men, one for unskilled. I don't know what the answer is, but I know about myself. I don't feel happy in a country like that. I want to be myself.'

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He walked faster, talking excitedly, indignantly, swinging his arms, and occasionally knocking into Alan and apologizing. There was plenty of room on the huge road. A grass strip separated it from another road for traffic going the other way. They had it all to themselves. Alan's thoughts ran parallel to Tug's, stretching ahead like the two moonlit roads.

'I wonder what it's like in Russia,' Alan said.

'I'd like to see. Though I'm not much good at doing what I'm told. It used to make me disgusted in the castle, hearing mean little men who'd never achieved anything belittling the Russians. It made me think a lot. If the Huns had allowed any books about Russia into the castle, that would have been one of my stunts.' He laughed, and added: 'As long as it didn't involve reading economics. I could never settle down to that. But if communism can get rid of classes, I reckon it's high time we had something like it in England.'

Alan said thoughtfully, 'I reckon it is time. Only I wonder if that would be enough. Don't you think as soon as people get comfort they go soft?'

'Maybe. But the enthusiasm would last a long time. That's another thing I miss at home.'

Alan noticed the way he said 'at home', affectionately, almost wistfully. The phrase had escaped him by accident, and he meant it, although he had just said that he was not at home in England; whatever his wanderings he would always have a longing to return there.

'I believe people could be much happier if they didn't have to live up to these artificial standards,' Tug said. 'Look at Bill Franklin. He's such a frightful snob, and he's always grumbling, much more than anyone else. It's because he's got nothing to do. He can't show off his money and he can't think of anything else. His standards have gone. Anyhow, they weren't his own standards. He was just copying them from people like Simon, who was born with them. He's just a rich man's son trying to be aristocratic.'

'I didn't like Bill much.'

'He could be a fine chap, though, if he wasn't always trying to show you what a fine chap he was, trying to live up to something that isn't natural to him. He's got tons of energy.'

'Geoff Larkin . . .' Alan began.

'Oh, Geoff! He's too bloody clever for me. His mind's got into such a mix-up he's lost sight of himself. He'll just go on being smart and modern and using clever new words and telling everyone how much he's been through, and I don't believe he'll ever experience anything. Not what I call experience.'

'Did you see the sketch he did of you?'

'No. What was it like?'

'Quite amusing.'

'Oh, it'd be that all right. All my clumsiness and my crazes, I suppose.'

'Yes, he'd hit that part of it off pretty well. That reminds me. I've got something in my pack Jim Irving wrote. He gave it me in case . . . I mean, he gave it me to take home. I haven't read it yet.'

'Jim? I didn't know he wrote.'

'Nor did I. He's a sly devil. You never know what he's up to.'

'I reckon he's one of the people who really have had a bad time in prison. He never talked about it, rather like Brian. Brian had an outlet, but Jim never seemed really keen on escaping. He didn't seem to have an outlet at all. I didn't know he wrote. Can I read it?'

'I'll get it out to-morrow.' Alan stopped. 'Hear the planes? They must be pretty close.'

They listened and the roar came closer.

'There they are!' said Tug. 'Huns. Christ! they're low.'

Three fighters scudded out of the clouds above their heads. The darkness magnified their vague shadows, until they looked like evil angels swooping, like Prince Lucifer in the poem: 'On a starred night Prince Lucifer uprose.' They were going towards the targets on the skyline, where a rose of fire had begun to glow.

'How long do you think this bloody war will last?' said Tug.

'Much longer than I thought when it started.'

THE ESCAPE

'So do I. My last letter from home said "Home for Christmas". Just because Italy has packed up.'

'They didn't say Germany was running out of oil, did they?'

'No, they've stopped that. They still think Germany will crack internally though. You know, morale going and all that cock.'

'It'd be interesting for a few of them to come here for a bit,' Alan said. 'We were pretty well cut off in the castle. Still, we had some idea. I don't think there's much sign of any break-up. Of course you can't tell, seeing so little. But I think they'll go on because . . . well, almost from habit, and because they don't know how to do anything else.'

'So do I. I don't believe ninety per cent of the people in England have the faintest idea of what things are like in Europe. I don't think half the blokes in the castle knew. Brian knew, and we've learnt a bit by escaping. Sometimes I wonder if many people at home have much idea of what they're fighting, or what people in Russia and Europe think they're fighting for. I've got a better idea than I had but, my God, I'm still pretty confused.'

They walked on, still talking, while the raid died down. Conversation, thought Alan, that's another thing I want. Conversation and friendship. The road stretched ahead of them; he could have gone on like that for a long while.

III

THE next afternoon, after they had had their daily sleep and were resting by the ashes of their fire in a deep wood, Alan read Tug the little story which Jim Irving had given him. All their mess, and many others in the castle, had given them messages to take home. Harry Ferguson's, of course, were to his wife and children. Alan was to buy them each a present and say that Harry thought it a very good thing for them all to be quit of him for a while.

'Mary will want you to stay, I know she will,' he said apologetically. 'She'll ask strings of questions about my health, and whether I change my underclothes, and are my blankets aired, and am I gambling. You can tell her that everything is perfectly all right. All I ask of her is a decent meal when I get home. You might tell her I've learnt to cook. That'll keep her up to the mark.'

Bill Franklin had been more casual.

'If you see my old girl,' he said, 'give her my love, naturally. Tell her what a nightmare it is. If she wants to know why I haven't written, just explain that there's nothing to write about.'

'Will she be at your flat?' Alan had asked.

'I've no idea, to tell you the truth. She seems to be all over the shop. She's got a job of some kind in a Ministry. She can look after herself all right. But don't tell her I'm gambling. I'll let her know myself, when I've won a bit back.'

Geoffrey Larkin had messages for his agent and for the intelligent girl.

'Tell them that this monastic life has its compensations,' he said. 'They know I always had something of the recluse in me, and they'll understand. I'm putting everything, really everything, into these sketches, and they can expect something. And tell Sophie to go on writing. Her letters are a real joy.'

Sophie had an apartment in a place called Mecklenburgh Square, in London. Alan supposed he would have to go there.

Simon Dempster, on behalf of his father, offered acres of hospitality and reams of letters of introduction.

'He's bound to put you both up,' he said. 'The Marlborough Club'll find him, unless he's in the country. Then it's Stoke Manor, near Lowestoft. He'll be tremendously excited seeing you. I shouldn't wonder if he took you to see the Prime Minister. Anyhow, tell him to do all he can about mail, and Red Cross parcels, and all that. He loves pulling strings. Do you shoot?'

'The odd rabbit.'

'You might get back in time for the grouse. I don't know if he'll be going up to Scotland this year, but there are sure to be a few partridges at home.'

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And he patted Alan and Tug affectionately and gave them each a packet of chocolate he had saved.

Jim Irving had been rather secretive. He took Alan aside on the morning of the escape and produced a small blue note-book.

'I don't know if you'd have room for this,' he said awkwardly. 'It wouldn't take up much room, but you're probably full up already. There's nothing the Germans could take exception to, if you got caught, but you probably prefer not to take it.'

'What is it?'

'Oh, it's just a story I wrote. As a matter of fact, I wrote it for Harry's kids to read. There's nothing much in it, but if you're going to see his wife I'd be very grateful if you'd take it to her.'

'Sure there's nothing explosive in it? No code?'

'No, nothing. It's just a children's story that came into my head after you told us about that dream. The one when the castle took to air. And the same day Harry said he wished he could write a story for his children, and this thing came into my head.'

'Certainly I'll take it. I didn't know you did that sort of thing.'

'Oh, it was an accident.'

'Anything else?'

'I'd like to get a copy made and have it sent to my sister,' he said diffidently. 'She used to illustrate things like that. I don't know if she still does. She's probably a Waaf or a Wren by now and manning an ack-ack battery.'

'I'll call on her.'

'Will you? I'd be very grateful. Tell her I'm O.K.'

'I will.'

'But you aren't,' Alan had thought, 'though I won't tell her that; and if I did tell her I would have no idea what's wrong.'

He opened the crumpled note-book now, smoothing it out on the forest floor of moist leaves, and remembered what Tug had said the night before about prison being the worst for Jim of all of them. Perhaps there would be some clue.

YES, FAREWELL

There was nothing gloomy about the story. It was a fantasy, very light and unpretentious, on the theme of his own dream. One of the prisoners is dozing in bed, when the town clock strikes midnight, a storm comes bowling along the valley, rocking and pulling at the castle, which finally bursts loose from its foundations and flies away. He rushes to the window and sees the astonished townsfolk gaping and waving from the top windows, in white night-gowns and night-caps, as in old prints of the famous midnight steeplechase. All sorts of impossible phantasmagoric adventures befall the prisoners, who now find themselves living in plenty, like travellers on a luxury cruise. Alan recognized fragments of actual events, reminiscence, splinters of dreams, little details of real people, a whirl of jumbled extraordinary images that had flown into this weird narrative out of the caverns of Jim's delirium. He must have been in some kind of delirium to write it. It was part Edward Lear, part *Alice in Wonderland*. Sometimes it broke into verse, bubbling through the prose. The travellers had everything they wanted.

The wine and food were very good,
The plates were washed with gin.
The birds flew past us ready cooked.
We simply pulled them in.

Some, in their obliging way,
Kept sauce beneath their wing.
Some came in whole, *en casserole*,
And one we kept to sing.

It sang a song of home, sweet home,
And on the topmost C
I held my fan before my eyes
And wept into my tea.

And women past control got up
And begged us all to wish.
We drained them of their surplus blood
And served it with the fish.

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The castle's crew were such as you
Would find on any cruise,
Some proud of being human, some
Because they cannot choose.

Some clapped their hands upon their brows
For fear of loss of face.
Some sat quite still, and never moved
Because they knew their place.

Some of us were very poor,
Others very rich.
We hit upon a plan to stop
Us knowing which was which,

And dressed to suit our mental growth,
Thus thwarting social feuds.
The poor all wore more than before.
The rich were mostly nudes.

'Not a reference to his mess, I hope,' said Tug.
'I'm afraid it must be. Do you like it?'
'It's crazy. I always thought Jim was a bit crazy.'

Alan read on. More prose, then more verse, and two verses
that seemed to refer to some personal recollection of Jim's, which
neither of them could account for.

There was a mortal angel.
I did not find her there.
I doubt if I shall ever find her
There or anywhere.

She seems to have been quicksilver.
Quicksilver in a sieve.
Her sweetness and her gaiety
Were not the kind that live.

'Did Jim have a girl?' Alan asked.
'I should say he'd had many. He looks it, anyhow.'
'It never occurred to me. He always seemed pretty quiet.'

YES, FAREWELL

'He'd got one of the most debauched faces I've ever seen. Sunken cheeks, and lines under his eyes. You didn't notice it unless you looked at him closely. I should say he was a man with a past.'

'Jim?'

'Certainly. You're too busy seeing the best in people. Not that there's anything bad about a dissipated past. Mine hasn't been what you'd call snow-white and I wouldn't say I was wicked. Oh, yes, Jim's seen life all right. Read some more.'

'It ends fairly soon. There's a note here explaining something.'

In the margin alongside the verses with which the strange story ended Jim had written a few lines in pencil. Alan read the verses first. The castle's journey was coming to an end, and the voyagers . . .

At last they heard a voice
Exclaiming 'land in sight'
And a radio announcer
Beginning to recite

A message of importance.
He gave it out in Norse.
Some took it down in semaphore
And others toyed with morse.

They saw a crinkled ocean,
And by its side a ghost,
A moving ghost that proved to be
A fringe of shifting coast.

The castle crashed in silence.
We landed with no sound,
And passed the time with puzzles
Till all of us were drowned.

Cracked upon a coral reef,
The castle slid between
A sky half red, half yellow,
An ocean partly green.

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Deep bells swung under water,
Crystal in the town,
Meet in mid-air the month and year
And morning it went down.

That was the end and the note Jim had written alongside said: 'The castle is the world of imagination. The coast on which it crashes is the world of reality. Perhaps I should say, the world we call the world of imagination and the world we call the world of reality. When I wrote, in a fever, this nonsense story for Harry Ferguson's children, my thoughts were certainly not those which ordinary events provoke in me. I seemed to be living a separate life, which at last came into conflict with and disintegrated upon the life I saw each day being lived all around me.'

'He must have been balmy,' said Tug. 'Everyone in the castle was partly balmy. I liked the story. It'll give Harry's kids a nightmare.'

'God knows what the Huns will think of it if we get captured!' Alan said. 'They'll think it's a code.'

'Stop saying *if* we get captured. We aren't going to get captured. Let's have some bully beef. I'm hungry and we've got twenty miles to-night.'

'We're running out.'

'Never mind. We can get spuds anywhere. And apples.'

'We'll be lucky if we get apples. The season's nearly over. And if we go on through all these forests we won't find many spuds. Besides, we've got several days to go.'

'Oh, come on. You're as bad as Brian.'

Alan was now playing Brian's part, acting as a brake on Tug's impetuosity. He took it as a joke instead of becoming annoyed. Tug too laughed at Alan's seriousness and occasional solemnity. He could never worry for long about anything himself. He was so certain, now that everything had gone so well, that they would be over the Swiss frontier in a week. Alan recovered his own caution as a counterpoise. Inside him, he was very excited. His fever had gone and he only felt the rheu-

matism in his leg if he slept on the wrong side and could find no protection against the wind. Once more, after a long drink at the end of a tiring march, that bewildering dizziness had come over him and he had felt the constriction above his heart. But he learnt to be careful. He wanted to hoard his resources for the last two days, when they would be nearing the net of fixed posts and moving patrols that watched the frontier. He thought of their arrival on the far side. 'We are British prisoners-of-war. May we use your telephone?' It would be necessary to walk on several miles after they had crossed, to make sure. One or two prisoners had been caught through over-confidence at the end. One man had waded the stream that separated Germany from Switzerland, in the spring of 1943, sat down on the far bank, lit a cigarette and taken in a few breaths of freedom, when he felt a hand on his shoulder. '*Komm mit mir, mein Lieber.*' Well, it had been his own fault. They mustn't make mistakes like that.

They were into Bavaria now, among the greener valleys and clear white streams, with peaks of mountains on their left and forests everywhere. The architecture of the farms changed from stone and half-timber to neat wooden chalets on the sides of slopes, and in the villages the walls were painted in bright colours and decorated with national and religious mottoes. They saw more Catholic churches, with ornate images in the graveyards. They took precipitous paths on the sides of steep pine forests and went to sleep by the side of tumbling burns. The paths were numbered and marked with small sign-posts and now and then they came out within sight of youth hostels, the glaring swastika brandished from a mast in front. The sun and wind put colour back into their pale cheeks. Alan felt healthy and exhilarated, as he had not felt since the days of Norway, and the dismal castle was quite forgotten.

They passed a wide green clearing in the forest, where a hundred German boys and girls were doing exercises in front of a wooden pavilion. They stopped to rest and watched them from a distance. A plump bareheaded schoolmaster stood in the middle, with the girls on one side in white blouses, and the boys

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in black shorts and brown shirts, on the other. When he blew a whistle, they all performed the same action at exactly the same time, with perfect musical regularity, either bending on their haunches, or leaping up in the air and throwing their arms back, or lunging forward like fencers with their hands on their hips. One girl was running round the clearing, trying to keep on her toes, her over-developed breasts bobbing up and down inside her thin white blouse; when she went past them, they saw her face, set and determined, rather like Brian Clyde's but red from exertion.

'That's five times round,' said Tug. 'She must have done a mile. I couldn't run a mile if I was paid.'

'Perhaps she's practising for a race.'

Suddenly the master blew a whistle. All scattered. The boys lay down in ditches, behind humps, and began to stalk one another, pausing to aim imaginary rifles, while the master corrected their positions and the girls formed a circle for an athletic dance. The master whistled again, and in an instant they had made a column and begun to march away, stepping out and swinging their bare arms like soldiers. 'One, two, three . . .' the master called out, and all began to sing, the boys first, then the girls, in shrill confident staccato voices. It was a fine tune, like most of the German marching tunes, but the brusque, aggressive drill in which they sang it offended an English ear. It sang them towards battlefields. It sang them towards death, and they thought it noble, and liked to have it in their heads and in their feet, drugging them and rousing them and giving them a fierce herd confidence in themselves.

Alan was easily stirred by singing, or by music of any kind. His mother used to sing at home, sitting upright at the piano like a Sibyl, and when she sang quietly he enjoyed it. But sometimes she sang in public, for concerts, or in church, and then she put into it an emotional tremor which betrayed her secret unfulfilments and embarrassed him. He wished she would stop and wanted to go away, painfully conscious of the rich quavering notes, and all the people looking at her. But at home

he sat up late listening to her; afterwards, happy with his admiration, she told him how she had studied on the Continent in her girlhood at Dresden and Milan, and might even have gone into grand opera. But now she was careful of the high reaches and the sugar-plum arias, uncertain of her own powers and aware of his resistance; and she sang more often songs of narrative, lullabies, and restful serenades, Brahms, Schubert, and sometimes Hugo Wolf. She admired the Germans for the culture she had learnt from them, and neither of the great wars had shaken her. Perhaps, too, she admired them for something deeper, frustrated, and romantic, akin to herself; she would not have been out of place among the Valkyries.

Singing remained in his head for a long while, longer than most other memories. For years he would remember the chanting of that hymn the morning after they had escaped. After his first escape, when he had been making for the Danish frontier and the island of Rügen, he had been recaptured and taken to a naval camp near Bremen. It was a lonely spot, stranded on the edge of the Luneberger Heide, where the white sand blew up in gritty clouds all day. In the summer of 1942, when he was waiting to be transported to the castle, some new prisoners came in who had been captured in a raid on the French coast. He envied them their cheerfulness and enthusiasm. They sang often, making him think how far his senses and his spirit had died. They marched along the sandy road, whistling the songs of freedom, the 'Marseillaise', the 'Internationale', the 'Wearing of the Green', 'John Brown's Body', the swinging clarions of rebellion echoing in the enslaved continent; and the old prisoners, full of their chagrin with the past, and even the German sentries, stood by the wire and listened to them.

Throughout this and his other escapes Alan kept his eyes open. The prisoners went into the world so seldom that, even if it was only for an hour's journey to the dentist, they must expect to be questioned about everything they had seen. Did they go into cafés, and what was the food like there? Were the people civil, or hostile, or indifferent? What was thought about the defection

of Italy? How did the Germans account for the defeats in Russia? In the first days they used to draw hopeful general conclusions from small details. Their disillusionment had not then developed into professional scepticism. They had still been ready to believe what they wanted to believe, and even in 1940 some of them had really thought that they would be home by Christmas that year, or at the latest by 1942.

By 1943 few consistent optimists were left. The majority had learnt their lesson, and as Alan and Tug walked on towards the frontier they were very careful about taking anything they saw as evidence of anything else. A good deal of it was to be seen in any country in war-time. Cultivation was to the limit, and nearly all the workers in the fields were women and small children. The lack of cars, the hand-ploughs, the bullocks drawing carts through the village streets, continually gave Alan the impression of being in some primitive country or in a life of several centuries ago. The shops they passed were poorly stocked. Nothing could be bought at the station cafés without ration cards, except coffee, but one night they went by what seemed to be a night-club. They had a rare glimpse of brilliant lights inside and the smell of cooking food swam out to them; their mouths watered and they trudged on very reluctantly. In one village they went through in day-time, the population had turned out to listen to a speech and Alan and Tug remained in order not to be conspicuous. Ley was speaking, the so-called labour leader, said to be the best-hated man in Germany; his voice had an unpleasant scratching note, never many notes from screaming, and as he became excited his mouth seemed to be full of spittle. From the apathy of his listeners in the square, those who wished could have assumed that the government was unpopular; from the punctuating cheers and *heils* it could equally easily have been assumed that everybody was behind it.

There were no *Wandervögel* on the roads now. The students who during the inflation and the depression had taken out their guitars and mandolines to make a living were all at the front, so that Alan and Tug had the mountain paths to themselves.

They rang across the cobbles of old towns, till they imagined the whole place must be awake. They crossed the Danube at Ingolstadt during the day by the new autobahn bridge a few kilometres outside the town. The river was not blue at all, but yellow, yellow and racing, so rapid that Alan was surprised even to see a tug on it, drawing six barges. The railways were usually crowded. They travelled in the jolting *Personenzug*, Alan taking the tickets, and usually they hid themselves behind a newspaper so as to avoid conversation. The guards were young girls, who chattered and flirted with soldiers on leave. Orders were posted on the walls and in all the waiting-rooms, reminding the people at home of their soldiers in the East.

Few of the Germans seemed to read the newspapers, and none among the poorer people. The drapers' shops invariably had a display of mourning. The shadow of Russia could be felt, though Alan did not hear the war openly discussed. There were very heavy penalties for indiscretion; grumbling could be punished by imprisonment. He could not persuade himself that the people looked cowed; they did not look particularly alert, but solid, with a kind of animal no-alternative endurance. The children he saw had healthy complexions, although their legs and arms were thin. He saw an industrious, organized people, only a few of whom enjoyed what they were doing thoroughly; and the rest just went on. He fancied he caught in their faces signs of a deep, helpless fatalism; he noticed frequently how oriental were the features of many of them, broad-cheeked and slant-eyed and expressionless, and the obituary notices in their newspapers included many Slav names, ending in *-ski* and *-itz*.

They reached Augsburg station. They were waiting in a corner of a platform, expecting a connexion towards Innsbruck, when a train slid in, one of those long European trains with carriages high off the line and several steps into the compartment. The usual Germans got out: men in light-coloured loose rain-coats and soft corded hats, with brief-cases under their arm; spick and span young officers with little daggers and peaked hats worn at a slight slant; soldiers dragging kit-bags; and stout

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respectable fraus in white blouses, black straw hats, and blue serge skirts. One or two, lost, or bewildered by the crowd, ran up and down to find an official. Suddenly the crowd separated, there was a kind of drawing away of skirts, and a little group approached. They walked in file, one man handcuffed between two guards in green uniform. Some of the men were having to be dragged along, not because they were resisting, but because they were exhausted. They were political prisoners. They must have been arrested and taken straight from their homes. Three of them were still in evening dress. Their faces were white as chalk and utterly dead, and the powerful brutal-faced guards held them like executioners. As they went past, Alan heard one German in the crowd whisper to another:

'Who are they?'

The other looked hurriedly away:

'Weiss nicht.'

As far as Augsburg, Tug and Alan had been going south. Now they intended to turn south-westwards and then westwards, hoping to enter Switzerland by the famous Schaffhausen pocket, through which several prisoners had already crossed the frontier. They had been going eleven days, longer than either of them had been out before, and they were growing tired and hungry. This time it was Tug who was in trouble. He had not brought enough pairs of socks, and Alan had none to spare. During the rainy period the wet pair had chafed his feet, so that by now he had blisters on his heels and limped painfully. He cut off the blistered skin, but Alan had to slow up for him. Their food was getting low, in spite of Alan's economies; if it took them more than four days and nights to reach the frontier, they would have nothing left at all. They rationed themselves to biscuits and a small slab of chocolate at the beginning of a march, and the same half-way through, ending with a slice of bully beef. Their packs were much lighter now. The weather held, sun and wind, and they were so tired that they slept like logs, without troubling to keep watch.

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They were approaching a small town. The stars shone brilliantly, and the wind was dry and cold. Winter was arriving and there would be a frost. Alan suddenly had the sensation that they were being followed. He could have sworn that he heard footsteps, perhaps a hundred yards behind. He stopped, but evidently there was nothing. He went on again, straining his ears, and this time he knew for certain that someone was behind him, possibly more than one. He stopped again, and there were the footsteps, padding on a few paces, muffled, and then stopping. He went on again, and the footsteps went on with him.

Quickening his pace, he moved up level with Tug, who was dragging his blistered right leg and humming to himself.

'We're being tracked,' he said.

'Who by?'

'I haven't asked them.'

'Are you sure?'

'Listen for yourself.'

They walked on the sandy fringe at the side of the road, and heard the footsteps distinctly now; two, possibly three people.

'I don't like it,' said Tug. 'Not at all.'

'They're certainly trailing us. They might be *Landwehr*.'

'How far is it to the village?'

'About three kilometres.'

'It's going to be damned awkward if they follow us there and then give the alarm. If that happens, we've had it.'

'We could run.'

'If they're *Landwehr*, they're armed. And I can't run with this bloody heel. I'm b—— if I'm going to be caught now. The only thing to do is to turn off.'

They were approaching a sharp bend in the road, with a small wood coming down to it.

'That's the place,' said Tug. 'Nip under cover as soon as we get round the bend.'

They jumped a ditch and hid behind a couple of tree-trunks a few yards back from the road. They heard the footsteps

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growing louder. A tall broad-shouldered figure, wearing neither hat nor coat, came softly round the bend, passed their hiding-place, and stopped. He strained his head forward, listening. A second figure appeared, also without hat or coat, and walking with a heavy stick higher than his waist. The two met in the middle of the road and put their heads together. They looked towards the wood.

'We'd better get back a bit,' Alan whispered. 'We may have to run for it. It doesn't look as if they're armed.'

'Do you think they're Germans?'

'They're exactly like my idea of escaped prisoners, apart from the club.'

'We can't take any risks.'

They wriggled back so that they were hidden and could get a clear start away. The moon came out and standing flattened against their tree-trunks they saw the two men in the road vividly. The second one was small and neatly built, with a completely round head. The other took him by the arm and drew him into the cover they had just left themselves. A match flared and two heads were bowed over a scrap of paper.

Tug chuckled. 'It's O.K.,' he said softly. 'How bloody funny! They can't be Huns.'

The two strangers' voices rustled in the dark. The match went out and another was lit guarded in a cupped hand.

'Who are you?' Tug called out in English.

A glimpse of two startled faces in the wavering flame; then darkness and silence.

'Ask them in German,' Tug said.

'*Wer sind Sie?*'

'*Wer sind Sie?*'

'*Engländer,*' Tug said. It was one of the few German words he knew.

They heard whispering, and branches crackling; and then a low-pitched rather throaty voice began to hum a tune. It went on for a few bars, after which the same voice said in German:

'What is the name of that tune?'

'It's the "Lambeth Walk",' Alan said.

'Tell them,' said Tug.

'The "Lambeth Walk",' he repeated louder.

Two figures rose from the road-side and walked cautiously towards him. Alan did not at all like the look of the club, which the small one grasped as if he meant business.

'Are you escaping?' the other said, in broken English.

'Yes. For Christ's sake, put that club away. Who are you?'

'We're Russians.'

And suddenly the two men moved forward in the moonlight, laughing and chuckling, pulling Alan and Tug by the shoulder, slapping them on the back, shaking hands with them, and talking excitedly all the time, sometimes in English, sometimes in German, and finally in rivers of bubbling words which Alan hoped were Russian.

'We were uncertain. We could not go past you,' observed the little one, who had dropped his club and stood in front of Alan, gripping him by both arms. 'We thought you were Germans. We were waiting for you to go into the village.'

'You were afraid? My God! What did you think *we* were? We thought you were stalking us.'

'Stalking?'

'Following. We thought you were German police.'

They were all laughing with relief. The tall Russian said seriously: 'We had better go further from the road. There may be more behind.'

This made the little one laugh more. 'Perhaps there are hundreds of us, all following one another,' he said. 'Come on. Where are you going? Where have you come from? Just think of it. Thinking that you were Germans!'

When they had found a safer place to talk, they could take a look at one another. The taller Russian had an unusually long head, and a high forehead, with a fleshy jutting lower lip. The strangest thing about him was his eyes, with heavy lids like the dimmers on headlamps; they blinked and fluttered continually, so that the eyes seemed to spark. Alan put him at about thirty-

five. He was the leader of the two. The other was almost a boy, ruddy like David in the Psalms, with very fair hair clipped short on his round head. He kept on looking at the other, expecting directions from him.

'Well, what are your names?' Tug asked.

The older one said something incomprehensible.

'I'll never get that,' said Tug. 'I'll call you Ivan. That's the only Russian I know. What about you?'

'Mischa.'

'Mischa. That's easier. Ivan and Mischa.'

'Are you officers?' Ivan asked.

'Yes. Are you?'

'No. We are both soldiers. We are going to Jugoslavia.'

They had escaped from a labour camp near Leipzig and had been walking for more than a month. Their clothes were very thin, poor quality, the ordinary uniform of the foreign workers in Germany, and their boots badly needed patching. Their plan was to reach the guerrilla fighters under Marshal Tito, to whom many of their comrades had gone already. They showed the route on their map and Alan was struck by the detail in which it had been planned. Major Ford at the castle prided himself on his organization, but the Russians' maps were even better. They had far more information about the whereabouts of German patrols and specially protected areas. Their compasses were excellent. Ivan even had a British military protractor.

'It was given me,' he said. 'There were British soldiers in the compound near us. They were very friendly. When we were starving they gave us their bread. The Germans tried to stop them but they kept on smuggling it through. Yes, there are many of us who would have died but for that.'

Mischa nodded his head gravely, smiling at Alan and Tug. The two Russians went on for some time, telling about the food the British troops had given them. They were full of gratitude; it was something they said they would never forget. Alan had heard many of these stories; he knew them to be true from his own experience in the early days. He had seen the Russians

then, living like animals behind the wire of a huge compound. They were gaunt and starved, wearing rags and tatters of old sacks, and their eyes looked out feverishly from skulls. The Germans put them on the hardest work, men and women alike, and if they did not work they flogged them or let them die. Ten Russians had each day a loaf which served for five Englishmen. They were never given meat and were lucky if they got soup. Consequently they had died not in scores, but in hundreds. The Germans had forbidden the British medical officers to visit them, and they were buried naked in heaps, wheeled out in barrows to pits which had been dug by others soon to follow them. All this Alan had seen several times. The Germans had tried to separate the British, but usually they managed to pass bread and tea through the compounds. The Russians in return gave them baskets woven out of straw from the palisades; and towards nightfall they used to come outside the British compound and sing their songs.

'Where did you learn the "Lambeth Walk"?' Alan asked. 'Our soldiers must have taught you.'

'Yes, that was how we learnt.' And Mischa began to sing it, getting the tune but making nonsense of the words. 'They said that if we ever met someone who said he was English and didn't know that tune, then he was a liar.'

'Thank God for that!' Tug said. 'We might have sliced each other up. Do you use that club much?'

'Not yet. Only if it is necessary. Have you nothing to protect yourselves?'

Alan did not like to say that, if he and Tug were caught, their plan would probably be to consider themselves caught. He had never yet heard of a British escape in which violence was deliberately planned. Death was the certain penalty, and life was still too dear. But Ivan and Mischa had no doubts.

'If a German tries to stop us, we shall kill him,' Ivan said. 'Why not? If we are taken we shall be killed anyhow. If there are several Germans, that will be different. We shall have to run. What will you do when you get to Switzerland?'

'We shall go to the British Legation.'

'That is your representative there?'

'Yes. He will send us back to England.'

'And then you will go back to the fighting?'

'Yes.'

Ivan repeated it all in Russian to Mischa, who nodded his head in a sage child-like way. He had begun to look at them both inquisitively, touching their shoes and clothes and listening intently. Alan was on the point of asking them why they did not go to Switzerland too. But it was different for them, incongruous, out of the question. They were not going home. They were going to Yugoslavia, where the nearest fighting was, and by the quickest way.

The four of them took to each other, and decided to go on together until the next night, when their ways would part, the Russians going south-east and Alan and Tug south-west. There was something open and disarming about Ivan and Mischa which Alan had seldom come across. They had no intervening self-consciousness. They were often merry and they gave Alan and Tug their confidence; allies, and therefore united. Alan was the one they chose as leader. He spoke German with them, and Tug tried a little French. Tug was enthusiastic at once.

'I've half a mind to go on with them,' he said. 'What do you say?'

'It occurred to me too. All the same . . .'

'There's something very comfortable about a British Legation. Is that what you were thinking?'

'Yes, it was. I'd like to get home.'

'They're a fine pair,' Tug said thoughtfully. 'They're pretty determined. I reckon they have to be. No Protecting Power, nothing like that. They're on their own.'

He looked at Ivan and Mischa, who walked ahead of them, Mischa a little behind Ivan, twirling his club, his shadow slanting across the moonlit road.

'They'd have bumped us, if they hadn't found out we were English,' Alan said.

'They'd certainly have had a try. I think I could have managed Mischa. You could have taken Ivan on.'

'Thanks very much.'

Ivan was about six foot four, bigger than Tug and much more compact, shifting his weight from side to side as he walked. He was the educated one of the two; he spoke excellent German and his English was not bad. He had strings of facts at his finger-tips and a passion to acquire more. It embarrassed the two Englishmen. When they were lying up the next day, he suddenly said to Alan:

'Do you believe in God?'

Alan was taken aback, but the British genius for compromise came to the rescue.

'Yes and no,' he said.

'I don't.'

'Why not?'

'It's a myth. You can believe it if you like. When I was younger we used to jibe at the old folk for crossing themselves or kneeling before the icons. Now we leave them. Personally, I am not interested.'

'Does Mischa believe in God?'

'I shouldn't think so. Mischa! Do you believe in God? The Englishman wants to know.'

Mischa laughed and shook his head.

'Not many do,' Ivan said. 'In our camp we had a priest. He was a Serb. He was always trying to get us into the church. And he was always wanting to bury the people who died. There were six hundred of us there, and in all the time I was there no one went to the church, unless it was just to see. As for praying at the burying, that would not have been allowed by the Germans anyhow. Are you buried by a priest?'

'Most people are.'

'If they wish, there is no harm. But what does it matter? They are not there to enjoy it.'

'I suppose their friends like it.'

'Ah! Do they get drunk, then?'

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Alan was ashamed, because he could answer so few of the questions Ivan asked him. He asked what houses cost in England, and how many people lived in one room. He wanted to know how many women became engineers, and what were the reasons for a strike he had read of in the German papers. He had heard that before the war people in England wanted to let Germany attack Russia; was that true? He listened very carefully to the answers, translating them for Mischa, and blinking his heavy eyes like a dynamo torch. They sat talking long after they had finished their night's march. Alan said, it was stated the Russians had no liberty, and Ivan looked bewildered.

'But we have more liberty than you,' he said. 'Only your rich have liberty.'

'We can say what we like,' Alan replied. 'We can turn our Government out if we want to. You can't do that.'

'Why should we want to? Turn our Government out? Turn Stalin out?'

'I don't say you do want to. Obviously not. But supposing you did want to one day?'

Ivan shook his head. 'We shouldn't want to,' he said. 'It is our government.' He thought for some time and added: 'We have not your liberty, it is true. I noticed that when I talked with your soldiers. It would be good to have it, but other things are more important. One day we shall have it, perhaps, and then we shall have everything. But we do not miss it. We are happy, and many of your soldiers were not happy. They told me so. They wanted to go away from England. Many of them wanted to come to Russia.'

'Did they say why? I doubt if they would, really.'

'They were not free. To be free in England you must have money. The rich can do what they like, but the poor, no. We have no rich or poor, only those who work and those who do not work.'

The discussion went on, as it was going on all over the world. But Alan did not feel that it was an argument. Neither Ivan or Mischa bothered very much about the kind of liberty he meant.

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They had their own kind. Ivan had been learning to be a doctor before the war, working in a big hospital at Kiev. All his training had been free, and if he turned out to be good there would have been plenty of opportunities for him.

'The war has changed that,' he said. 'Now all the men are fighting and the doctors are mostly women. Besides, I am getting old.'

'How old are you?'

'Thirty-one. I have got into the wrong profession. But I shall be useful when we get to Yugoslavia.'

'How long will it take you?'

'Three more weeks. Perhaps more.'

Alan pictured the state they would be in by the time they got there, with the weather getting colder, and mountains to cross, and the rains likely to start any day now. They were tough, but very thin, and Ivan's cheek-bones stood out like a cliff. Mischa's face was the picture of health, brick-red where the weather had caught it, and with dancing eyes. His curly cropped hair was almost white, his voice gay, animated, full of laughter. Ivan heard him chattering to Tug, and laughed too, looking at him.

'He's very young,' he said. 'Not yet twenty. He's a farmer.'

'Where from?'

'From Ukraine. The Germans are there now, but we shall be back soon. Shall I show you?'

He took out a piece of paper and a stub of pencil and began to sketch the southern sector of the eastern front. Tug and Mischa stopped talking and the three lay on the grass, watching Ivan put in Kiev and Kirovograd and Krementechug, and the huge eastward bulge of the Dnieper river. He explained that the Germans would try to hold a line.

'Then we shall come down from the north, across the rivers, and there will be a great battle. We shall win, and the Germans will have to go back farther. Perhaps it is happening already. It will be very soon, but we have spoken to no one for two weeks. Do you know the position?'

Alan told them that everyone knew now there were going to

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be great battles. There had been rumours that the Germans were encircled, withdrawing into Rumania and Poland, giving up Russia.

'Here and there they may hold,' Ivan said. 'But never in strength. They will be encircled, and once they begin to go back the end has begun for them.' He tapped his fist on the paper. Mischa nodded his head, looking at them with sparkling eyes. Alan felt that it was the truth. 'And then you will land in Europe,' Ivan said. 'You must do that soon. When will it be?'

'Perhaps in the spring.'

'How many divisions will you have?'

'I don't know, exactly.' He put it higher than he expected. 'Forty, perhaps, in the first fortnight.'

'And you will get through?'

'Certainly.'

And he knew that they would, though talking to an Englishman he would have been cautious and spoken of big losses and possible reverses, prepared for the worst. Ivan and Mischa knew that their country would win; naturally he knew the same of his own.

He remembered many things that Ivan and Mischa said. He wished Bill Franklin had been there when they began to talk about other nations. Tug had made some critical remarks about the entire French nation, whom he bore an occasional grudge, like Bill, having been captured in France and seen the worst of them.

'What do you know of the French?' he asked Ivan. 'Have you ever met any?'

'We were in a working-party with them. French, Serbs, English, many others. We have not met any Americans yet.'

'Which do you like the most?'

Ivan shrugged his shoulders.

'What does it matter? What is the difference? There are good men and there are bad men. If they are honest, I trust them and they are my friends. If not . . .' he turned his thumb down.

Alan wondered if this gesture was international, or if he had learnt it from the British troops.

'What about women?' Tug asked.

'Ah, Russian women.'

Alan began to feel sleepy. It was midday already and he hadn't closed his eyes for twenty-four hours. His feet and knees were aching. He lay back in the bracken, pulling his raincoat over him, and heard the lively voices growing fainter and fainter. Tug said to Ivan:

'How many wives are you allowed in Russia? Is there free love?'

He heard Mischa's merry laugh.

'Ivan has done wrong. He has two wives. We do not like that now, do we, Ivan?'

'You? You oughtn't to be married at all. You're still at your mother's breasts. You oughtn't to be allowed one wife.'

Alan's fingers closed round a handful of earth and leaves. The wind stirred over him, and the sun was warm and fitful on his closed eyelids. The voices went on, far away, friendly, chaffing one another; he had an illusion of peace.

He slept the whole afternoon. Tug woke him, pulling at his shoulder.

'Talk about me snoring,' he said. 'You're like an old hog.'

'What's the time?'

'Time for some grub. We'll have to be moving soon.'

The colours were already out of the sky in front of him. He sat up, shivering, and began to lace his boots. Ivan and Mischa were not there.

'Where have the Russkys gone?'

'They've gone to fetch milk.'

'Milk? How the hell are they going to get that?'

'They say the farmers keep it down the wells. They've had a swig every morning.'

'I wish we'd known that. Why do they put it there?'

'God knows. Keep it cool, perhaps. Or else to keep it from being stolen. It's a tip worth knowing.'

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'Milk! When'll they be back?'

'They've been out half an hour. Shouldn't be long. Mischa's taken his club with him. It's a pity we've got to separate. I'm still not certain about it.'

'Three days only, and we'll be in Switzerland.'

'All the same . . .'

Yes, all the same they would have liked to go on together.

Mischa returned, stepping so lightly through the wood that they did not hear him, carrying a rusty tin canister.

'Here you are! What did I tell you?' he called out in German, and he put the canister in front of them. It was full of rich, thick, creamy milk, with bubbles on the top, the first fresh milk Alan had seen for three years.'

'Where did you get it?' he said.

'It's easy. Easy. Just watch the moment and fetch it. Have some?'

He poured the milk into a tin mug marked with a swastika and the German eagle and passed it round, grinning.

'Go on, more. We get it everywhere. Go on.'

'Now you, Mischa.'

'We'll leave some for Ivan. He's going to get bicycles.'

'Bicycles!!'

'There were some men coming back to the farm. They had bicycles. Ivan's going to see where they put them. Then we'll take them. He's going to give me a signal.'

'You'll want some help.'

'Depends how many.'

He slipped away into the trees.

'Bicycles!' Tug said. 'Supposing we could get four.'

'We couldn't take them right to the frontier. The roads are thick with posts.'

'We could take them within ten miles and drop them. It'd only mean one more night.' He was growing excited. 'Do you see what it would mean? We might be across the night after next.'

Alan said nothing. He was thinking of the objections, but he

could see none. All the last three weeks they had been on the look-out for bicycles, but none had been garaged near their hides. It was easily the best transport. Now that they were so near the end, they could not risk the trains, which they knew to be closely searched in the neighbourhood of the frontier. Goods wagons were put through steam before they left the German side. Walking was becoming more and more dangerous, but if they were on bicycles they could swish straight through an ordinary road patrol, before it had time to fire, and then the last part would have to be done as a tactical operation, bound by bound.

It was dark when Ivan and Mischa returned. Alan's heart sank. They had only two bicycles. The locks were still on the wheels and they carried them by the framework, held out in front of them.

'There you are?' Ivan said triumphantly. 'It was easy. They'd locked the shed and gone indoors, so they won't miss them till morning. You'll be clear by then.'

'Us!' said Tug. 'They're your loot. Any chance of getting any more?'

'There were only two. You're to have them. You're nearest to freedom.'

'No. No. They're yours.'

Alan shook his head. Tug thought they were joking.

'It's much better for you,' Ivan protested. 'Besides, Mischa doesn't know how to ride.'

'He'll have to learn. It doesn't take long. Come on, he can learn here.'

They broke the locks and took the two bicycles on to a level path running through the wood. They hoisted Mischa on to the seat. Ivan kept the bicycle steady from the rear, and Alan and Tug took the handlebars. They led him forward several yards, then let it go. Crash. He lay on the ground laughing, his legs mixed up with the frame.

'Shut up!' Ivan said angrily. 'Do you want everyone to come and watch you? Get on again.'

They schooled him for half an hour, now one of them letting

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go, now the other. Ivan was very impatient and began to swear at Mischa under his breath.

'This time you'll do it alone,' he said. 'Understand? Either you do it alone or there'll be trouble.'

Mischa nodded meekly and got on. They gave him a push and he wobbled twenty yards and fell off, clutching a tree. Ivan took off the leather belt round his trousers and towered over him.

'This time!' he said. 'This time! or you know what'll happen.'

And this time Mischa did it. He rode fifty yards, turned, and came back to them and got off by himself.

'There!' he said. 'I knew I could.'

After they had finished the milk, and had their meal, and the full moon had risen, Ivan and Mischa said good-bye. They all stood together in a clearing by the road-side. Tug was unfastening his wrist-watch, and Alan's hand went to the silver pencil he had kept ever since he left Gourock port, nearly four years ago. He gave it to Mischa, and Tug gave the watch to Ivan. In return the Russians gave them each an iron ring engraved with a small star, which they had worn on the second fingers of their right hands.

'Keep it,' said Ivan. 'And when our comrades come, show it to them.'

They shook hands.

'Good-bye, Ivan. Good-bye, Mischa. Good luck!'

'Good-bye. Good luck!'

They got on to their bicycles, Ivan balancing the long club across the handle-bars, and Mischa resting one hand on Ivan's shoulder. The moon shone on the grey road and Alan and Tug watched them ride away. 'Good luck,' Alan repeated to himself. The road dipped and the figures of the Russians disappeared, riding into the south, to the guerrilla war. A minute later they heard a crash. Mischa had fallen off again.

Next morning, before it was light, Alan and Tug turned off the same road after a twelve-mile march and took a path leading them up a steep hill. The notice on this path read:

'To the Look-out Tower (*Aussichtsturm*).'

The last night had taken it out of them and they rested several times going up the hill, regretting the bicycles. A tower loomed in the half-darkness, all that remained of an old castle. There were railings round it, and rusty green tables, and a tumble-down rotting kiosk which must once have been used for selling post-cards. A huge gulf gaped on the far side, full of eddying grey mists; it was like coming to the end of the world.

And now they were very near the end of their journey; their hopes at this point must not be allowed to betray them. They had safely passed the period of optimistic incaution. Those had been the days when they lit fires, and went to sleep at the same time, and walked alongside one another. Many people had been caught that way.

'From now on, Tug, we watch everything. I reckon it's the hardest part.'

'We'll make it.'

'We've been pretty lucky so far.'

'That's my hunch.'

'How are your feet?'

'The old heel's not so good. How many miles is it?'

'Twelve. We go off the main roads to-night. It should be easier walking.'

'Are you going to stay here?'

'I think we'd better wait till the mist lifts. Then we can have a look round. We should get a pretty good view from here. It looks like a famous place.'

'We ought to see the mountains.'

'And Lake Constance. I didn't think we'd get as far as this,' Alan said.

'I did,' Tug said.

They talked casually, pretending not to be in the least excited. From their tone they might have been out on a country walk. They lay down, cold and tired, with their backs against the kiosk and their raincoats underneath them on the dewy grass. The mists rose towards them and dissolved in trailing shawls,

THE ESCAPE

unveiling at leisure the break of day and the valley at their feet. Detail by detail this valley unfolded to the horizon, where the silver strip of the lake was almost hidden under huge white drifts of cloud. The black clouds had gone and the grey clouds were blowing over, with golden fringes, but these white accumulations on the horizon never moved. They could not move. They were the mountains of Switzerland, shining in the morning like mountains of imagination, protecting the happy valleys, child-like, dream-like.

'There you are,' said Tug quietly.

'Yes, there we are.'

They had not yet arrived; but they felt the exuberance and the anxiety, like an army looking at the enemy's capital after a long advance.

Where the white of those mountains was now turning red, eastwards, they would merge into the ridges of Yugoslavia. Ivan and Mischa were going there. Alan had been thinking of Ivan and Mischa. They were direct and frank; he could talk to them without detours. Ivan had ideas. Mischa was just merry. Both of them were receptive, responsive. They took in new impressions. There were no obstacles, nothing to shake off. Yes, he wished he had gone with them.

He vaguely imagined Russia: unending plains with the dust rising in summer, and the wheat waving, and in winter infinities of snow, and people devoted to their homes, yet with Messianic visions of the future. England was a country of valleys, enclosed until you came to the sea. The sea is still in us, in me, he thought, but at present it is sluggish. How inquisitive Ivan had been! How interested in Alan and in what he had to tell them! Their curiosity had abashed him. They asked him so many questions he could not answer. They had not wanted to talk about themselves. In the castle people asked questions in order to have an excuse for talking themselves. There was little exchange. Parallel monologues, Larkin had called them. Yet he was one of the worst of the monologuers. One day he had come to a meal full of a new theory of happiness.

'I have discovered what to do,' he had said. 'I have never taken enough interest in other people. Think of us all in this castle, all so different, with so much we could say, and yet what do we know of one another? I shall start to find out and stop bothering about myself.'

They had listened with pleasure, expecting to be asked questions about themselves, and for half an hour he had talked about himself and then gone away. Ivan had not spoken about himself at all. Mischa had been comical on that bicycle. Ivan would have beaten him if he hadn't learned to ride. In England we don't beat people. Perhaps we ought to beat them. No, we had liberty. People had their chance. They were different.

It was going to be a warm day. The sun was rising and the mists had nearly gone. He felt tired and the backs of his knees were aching. The sun shone on Tug's boots. It began to warm his cheeks. It pressed on his eyelids and he closed his eyes. Russia. Yugoslavia. They wanted doctors there, now, and after the war they would still want doctors, experts, men from the west, engineers. Yes, he had gone into the wrong job. He must learn something else. Those dismal clerks in the estate office, so kind, so antique. Good day, Mr. Maclaren. Good day . . . good-bye. . . .

His memories led him on. He turned them over and gazed into the future. A black and white setter came frisking round the ruined tower and began to bark at him. He jumped up.

'Tug! Tug! Get up!'

It was too late. A German in black gaiters and corduroy breeches, carrying a gun under his arm, followed the dog. He looked at them as they scrambled to their feet, their packs dangling.

'Your papers, please, *meine Herren*.'

PART THREE

DR. TOMAVICH

(Three months)

ALAN and Tug now passed into a land of the forgotten.

The Germans were uncertain of their identity and purpose, and had decided to treat them as dangerous men. Both of them had produced their prisoner-of-war discs, admitted that they were trying to cross the frontier, and given the name of the castle, claiming that they ought to be sent back there. This would have happened, but for two incidents. Tug made a desperate attempt to get away. He could not believe that they had really failed, within sight of the mountains. He still had his hunch. He told Alan that he would take the first chance for a break; when they were on the railway platform waiting to be moved back to prison, he made the excuse of going to the latrine, squeezed through a rear window, and disappeared. He was brought back after two hours.

This made the Germans twice as watchful. They believed that they had to do with ruthless men, who perhaps had some secret mission to perform. Neither Alan nor Tug had had a chance to shave. Their hair, clipped before they left the castle, had already grown longer than is usual in Germany. They were both broad and hefty and Tug was getting a murderous look in his eye; with his clothes torn, and his limp, and three days' stubble, he looked a regular ruffian. And the Germans had found the rings which Ivan and Mischa had given them.

'Where did you get these?'

'It's got nothing to do with you.' They stuck to their precarious international rights, giving only their names and ranks and nationality.

'So it has nothing to do with us?' said the police. 'We shall see. You are communists, are you not?'

'We told you we were British officers. You've seen our discs. You've only got to telephone where we came from.'

'And what are British officers doing with the star of Soviet Russia on their rings?'

'They're our allies.'

'And so all the British Army are wearing the Red Star? That is very interesting. No, no, my friends. You are communists.'

So the Germans took the rings away, stripped Alan and Tug, searched them naked, and never let them out of sight. Alan had luckily managed to get rid of Jim Irving's story, which would certainly have been taken for a code.

'We'd better have something definite to answer about those rings,' he said to Tug. 'It looks as if it might be awkward.'

'Just say we were given them.'

'When?'

'We might have had them all the time.'

'Since we left England? That wouldn't be much good. You were captured in France and I was captured in Norway, and Russia wasn't in the war then.'

'We could say we were given them at the Marlag at Bremen. There was a Russian compound there. Anyhow, if they're going to shoot us, it doesn't matter if we're communists or capitalists.'

'I don't think they'll shoot us.'

Tug shrugged his shoulders. He had become despondent and nervous. He asked Alan the same questions several times and did not wait for the answer. Where did he think they were going to be taken? What chance would there be of making a break off the train? He strode about the village lock-up, banging one fist against the other and working out impossible plans aloud. It was very dirty and insanitary, and mice ran along the walls at night. Alan and Tug slept on filthy straw under thin blankets, and woke up in the small hours with their feet like ice, and felt hungry all day.

Alan was even-tempered. He did not think it at all likely that they would be shot. He blamed their stupidity for not having thrown the rings away, but it had never entered his head; everything had happened very quickly. The mood of surrendering to circumstances, which he had left the castle to escape, returned. Ideas, which had vaguely entered his head, of making a planned development of his life, seemed to be waste of time. It was

innumerable small events, unnoticed when they happened, which really decided the way you went. If only he had not slipped on that rock in Norway . . . if only he had lost the toss . . . if only he had gone with Brian instead of Tug . . . if only there had been four bicycles . . . if only they had run for it as soon as that damned dog appeared . . . if only, now, they had thrown the rings away . . . if, if, if . . .

They had an escort of three armed guards to take them to Munich, and a carriage to themselves. Two guards sat between them and the window, the other stood in the corridor. These Germans were not at all like the guards at the castle. They would not join a conversation and they would not accept a cigarette. They had strict instructions, and whenever Alan or Tug moved the guards looked at them. The N.C.O. said that he did not know their final destination; but he took out a printed paper several times and studied it, and clearly he knew very well. When they reached Munich, Alan expected to change platforms and go on by train somewhere else, and so to the castle. But they were marched out, through the crowds, down the steps into the busy square, like the prisoners they had seen at Augsburg, past the trams clanging, and Alan suddenly remembered.

Prisoners had occasionally arrived at the castle who had not been taken on any battlefield. They were accused of spying and sabotage in the occupied countries. They never came to the castle direct; they came from some other gaol compared with which the castle was a rest cure. They had been in the Gestapo prison at Fresnes, near Paris, or in Berlin, at the Alexander-platz, or in Warsaw, Budapest, Belgrade. They arrived thin and haggard and one or two gave lectures about their experiences. Alan had heard these lectures: they had made him think how lucky he was to be a plain prisoner of war. He respected the courage of these agents. And now he remembered one of them mentioning the prison in the Josephine-strasse in Munich.

He saw the name of the street, painted on an enamel plaque at the corner, and began to feel uneasy. They were about to pass from a land of records and official lists and rules of war. Who

would know that they were there? There was not a soul in the wide world who had a track of them. They might just vanish, as thousands, hundreds of thousands had vanished.

The guards inside and outside the prison wore the same bottle-green uniform they had seen at Augsburg. Tug and Alan were handed over at once and their *Wehrmacht* guards went away, with none of the half-friendly words Alan remembered on previous escapes. After they had waited two hours in a bleak locked room with a full-length portrait of Hitler on the wall, his jaw set and his hands crossed in front of his genitals, they were taken into an office. A railing divided the desk from the rest of the room. A German captain told them curtly to take off their civilian clothes, and a guard held out a shabby grey tunic. They changed, after protesting, and were then told to give up their identity discs.

Alan and Tug both refused. They knew this trick. Above all, they had to keep their discs; it was all they had left to link them with the living world. They refused three times. The officer walked over to them and began to shout.

'Do you know where you are?' he roared, thrusting his face into theirs. 'We do not allow people to disobey orders here, I can tell you,' and he went on for some time. All the same the discs were not taken from them. They stayed hanging round their necks like talismans. Alan saw that he might be in for an unpleasant time; but after that he knew he would not be shot.

They were also allowed to keep their letters, and photographs of home, and the washing-things they had brought with them, except for razors. The two Russian rings were lying on the desk.

'Now, my friends,' said the officer, taking a calmer tone. 'You are communists, are you not?'

When they did not answer, he repeated the question and added: 'Where did you get these rings?'

'They were given to us,' Alan said.

'Where? Who gave them to you?'

'They were given to us by two Russian prisoners in the naval

camp near Bremen. In the summer of 1942. If you wish to inquire, you will find out that we were there then.'

'So you had correspondence with the Russian prisoners? You knew that was forbidden?'

'They brought the rations into our compound. It was inevitable that we should talk to them.'

The officer was at a loss. He looked at Tug and suddenly began to rave and shout again.

'He wants you to stand to attention,' Alan said.

'There is discipline here,' shouted the officer. 'Discipline, do you understand? When you speak to any German in here, you will stand to attention.'

Tug put his heels together and looked at the German without answering, sullenly. He tried some more questions, using the technique of a professional interrogator, now threatening, now coaxing, sometimes polite, but they clung to their set answer. They were British prisoners of war, captured in Norway and France three years ago; they had escaped a month ago from Schloss Durheim, and they demanded to be sent back to a prisoner-of-war camp.

After an hour they were taken out. They went up one floor and along a scrubbed stone passage, much cleaner and less homely, Alan thought ruefully, than the passages in the castle. There were iron doors in the wall, with spy-holes; he saw the shutters moved back and eyes peeping out at them. It was a real prison this time. One of the doors was opened, and they were pushed in. A little thin man inside sprang back and gazed at them with frightened eyes, like a startled hare.

'Who are you?' he said.

The door closed, the keys rattled, and they heard the guard in the stone corridor.

'Englishmen,' Tug said; and they looked round the cell.

It was very neat and very bare. There were two double-tiered bunks, a table, with three chairs, and a latrine bucket in the corner. There was a smell of disinfectant. Light came in through a heavily barred and wired window, and the cell was quite warm.

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A small pile of clothes was neatly folded on one of the top bunks; the rest were empty.

'Where do you come from?' the man asked.

They told him a little of their story, leaving out the detail. He listened so closely that an unpleasant idea came into Alan's head. When Tug was beginning to talk about the two rings, he touched him on the arm. The man's eyes had sharpened and raising his head he said to Tug:

'And these rings you had? You say the Soviet star was on them. Are you communists, then?'

'No,' said Tug. 'They were given us . . .'

Alan interrupted. 'The Germans think we are communists,' he said. 'The rings were given to us at another camp. There were some Russians in the next compound. It was a present.'

The man looked at them and nodded his head slowly.

'I see. I see.' Then he said: 'Will you sit down? The bunks are more comfortable, but we are not allowed to lie on them until dark.'

He spoke very correct grammatical English. He appeared to be a well educated man. His hands were white and well-kept, the half-moons showing clearly, the nails clean. He wore the same drab sack-like tunic as themselves; it hung very loose over his stomach and though he was small the trousers were too short for him. His forehead was high with a few grey streaks brushed back from it, and he had exceptionally large brown eyes.

They sat on the three chairs, anxious to talk but wondering how to start.

'You're not English, are you?' Alan said.

'No. I am a Serb. My name is Tomavich. Dr. Tomavich.'

'A doctor, eh?' Tug said. 'What of? What are you in here for?'

'Not a doctor as you mean the word in England. I was a professor of history three years ago. I am here for fighting against the Germans after my country was invaded. I was captured eighteen months ago.'

'Fighting?'

'It is an unusual occupation for professors of history. But then it is unusual for Englishmen to be in this prison. You say you are ordinary soldiers. Not parachutists? Not agents of any kind?'

'No,' said Alan. 'Ordinary soldiers.'

The professor clicked his teeth and looked sidelong at them. 'Strange that you should come here.'

'What sort of a place is it?'

He smiled, showing a gold tooth. The smile was a stranger in his face. He looked a man who had suffered a great deal, and Alan did not really believe he was there to spy on them. His eyes gave him away; they were frightened, listening eyes, that glanced repeatedly at the door.

'Where were you captured?' he asked.

'In western Bosnia.'

'Were there many of you?'

The professor did not answer; and the three of them sat silent at the little table, longing to talk and confide in one another, but not daring, out of mistrust and fear.

'It's not much of a place. Still, it's warm,' said Alan.

'There's central heating. It goes off at six o'clock.'

'When do the lights go on?'

'There are not always lights. Perhaps you had better read the regulations. Then I will explain to you what happens.'

At five-thirty every morning Schleppner, the N.C.O. in charge of their floor, opened the door and shook them awake. At five-forty-five they had to have their beds made and parade in the corridor outside with tin mugs and bowls. No knives were permitted them. They drew a mug of black coffee each at the end of the corridor, after they had washed. Schleppner stood over them while they washed for the first few days, to see that there was no talking to Tug and Alan. Everyone looked at them curiously, mostly with hostility; they understood that they were suspected of being spies. The prisoners stripped to the waist to wash, and their skin was scarcely enough to cover their bodies. They were walking skeletons. Their ribs stuck out. Their arms were thin and straight. Their faces had caved in and they had

grey complexions. They let their braces drop and their trousers slipped down until caught on protruding bellies, like the bellies of starving children. The Professor's chest was an arch of sticks, like the shell of a boat, and he looked as if a touch would knock him over. These men had all had a very hard time. It was different from Schloss Durheim. They had a desperate look, as if they would never get out alive.

After they had washed and had their coffee, which they drank with a slice of rough brown bread, there was nothing more to do. It was not permitted to lie on their bunks during the daytime, the professor told them, although there might be ways and means of getting round this rule. But he did not want to tell them more, for fear that they gave him away; and so the first few days they sat at the table, or walked up and down. It was a terrible strain. Alan felt one of them must explode.

At midday they had vegetable soup, usually with potatoes, and there was more soup in the evening, at the time the heating went off; this evening meal often had meat floating in it, and the professor told them that they were all behaving well at present, in order to get a special issue for Christmas. At seven o'clock one of them took the latrine bucket to the end of the passage and emptied it; by this time it was dark, and they went to bed, but not to sleep. Neither Alan nor Tug could sleep. It was far worse than the castle. Hunger and anxiety kept them awake; their thoughts burrowed into them like earwigs.

The Germans seemed to have forgotten them. It didn't matter whether they lived or died. No letters ever came into the prison and none ever left it. They were nothing. A grim sense of having nobody to care for them began to settle on them. Slowly, out of mere neglect and indifference, they might find their lives being taken away. And on top of it was the mistrust. Tomavich would tell them little about the Germans who ran the prison, or about the other prisoners, and every morning they were met with the same suspicious looks in the wash-house. They longed to unburden themselves.

They had been allowed to keep their remaining cigarettes and

matches, which they shared with Tomavich, smoking them at night, against the rules, as they lay on their bunks, with their faces turned to the wall. The city stirred outside. Tug was silent. He had plunged into a deep gloom. He still could not understand what had become of his luck. His silence distressed Alan.

Tomavich told them about the empty bunk.

'Count Anton Eulenstein sleeps there,' he said. 'He is a very distinguished man, an Austrian nobleman of great family, and at present we do not know why we are deprived of his company. It was said he had gone for interrogation, but I doubt that. He has already been a prisoner for five years and they know all about him.'

'When's he coming back?'

'We do not know. We do not know why we are brought here, or how long most of us will stay here, or why we leave here.'

Alan asked if there were any books.

'I have not been allowed them for some time. Only this one. I don't know if it is to your taste.'

He produced the national socialist history of Germany.

'It was given for my education,' he said, watching them. 'Would you care to read it?'

'I doubt if my German is good enough.'

'Shall I give you lessons? It will pass the time.'

So Tomavich began to give him lessons, sitting beside him like death, gaunt and thin, with his bright brown eyes, while Tug lay sullenly on his bunk. They read the history each morning. Tomavich spoke English exactly and took great pains with Alan's German pronunciation, making him repeat each sentence twice or more, until he had it correct.

'Achtsayn, achtsayn,' he said. 'Repeat after me. Achtsayn hundert und viertsig. The date of the Parliament of Frankfurt.'

Obviously he thought the book to be nonsense. Sometimes he could not contain himself. He frowned and twitched his mouth:

'Really, what a thing to say! How could they! History!'

And he clicked his teeth like a typewriter. He had very

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delicate gestures and the skin round his right eye was slightly distended, as if he had once worn a monocle.

Three times a week the prisoners walked in the yard in the centre of the prison. They had to walk in file, one behind the other. Schleppner and the senior German under-officer, Schulz, stood in the middle. Schulz always carried a leather thong, which he tapped against his boot, copying the Führer. He was all-powerful. Schleppner was out to please him. Some of the prisoners held their shoulders back and their heads up with deliberate effort. Most had caved in, slouching with heads down and bent shoulders, dragging their feet. They had to move at the pace Schulz thought suitable; after a quarter of an hour he blew his whistle, and they faced about and went the opposite way. No one was allowed to remain in the cells, unless he was gravely ill and Schulz gave permission. Talking was supposed to be forbidden, but a good deal went on when they fell in before and after the walk, and backward and forward over their shoulders while they were walking. Schleppner was not intolerant, but all of them had to keep their eyes on Schulz, who was capricious and cruel whenever he had the chance. He had a handsome hard-bitten face; his lips were thin, and his mouth and eyes were like straight cuts in a tight-skinned skull. As a boy, he had been a member of the *Freikorps* which roamed defeated Germany after the last war; he was the evil, death's-head kind of German.

The prisoners were chiefly political. Some of them wore the grey tunic Alan and Tug had been given, the majority were still in civilian clothes. The smartest was a Major Reinhardt von Vrede, an Austrian monarchist who had been arrested with Count Eulenstein after the nazis went into Austria. They had both spent several months under house arrest before being transferred to a fortress, and they had been in the Josephine-strasse a year. Vrede wore a loosely cut brown suit, like an English sporting suit, which had once been smart and was still well kept. His boots were excellent leather and a groove ran round the side, where ski-straps had been fitted. He bowed towards Alan and

Tug, and when they fell in managed to stand next to them.

'You're English, aren't you?' he said. 'I have many friends in England. I should like to talk to you. Will you stand near me?'

They talked in whispers, going up the stairs to their cells and along the bare scrubbed corridor. Vrede had a great number of questions to ask and when they separated he had an excited air, half-apologetic, as if anxious not to impose himself.

'He's lonely without Eulenstein,' Tomavich said. 'There's no one else here he's got much in common with. He likes to think of himself as Eulenstein's adjutant. They keep up quite a ceremony.'

'What did they do to get here?'

'The nazis thought them dangerous. They flatter them, to my mind. There is no chance of a Hapsburg restoration, no chance at all. They are brave and picturesque, and Eulenstein is cultured, and nothing more. Vrede is very stupid. Besides, he is ill. They could release him without the least risk.'

'Is that the only exercise we get?' Tug asked.

'That is all.'

'Christ Almighty! It's worse than the castle.'

'One does not want too much. It gives an appetite.'

Most of the prisoners were either communists or men the nazis called communists. One of them had been well-known in Vienna before the *Machtanschluss*. His name was Hans Stromers, and Tomavich talked to him for several minutes whenever they left the cell, but would say little about him inside. Stromers watched Alan and Tug closely. He was an ugly squat man with immensely broad shoulders, a jutting head, and apparently no neck. All the prisoners seemed to respect him and even Schleppler treated him with deference when Schulz was not near. He had been a railwayman. His mother was Hungarian and he had taken part in the communist revolution in Hungary in 1919 and in the fighting in Vienna in 1934. Tomavich spoke of these events as if Alan and Tug knew all about them. Stromers gave a crouching impression of power, like a muscular toad. He had a head of thick black hair and hair sprouted out of his open shirt. Alan guessed that he had

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given Tomavich some kind of order about them; when the two were talking Tomavich listened closely, and nodded his head at the end.

Few of the political prisoners had a specified term to serve. They were there at the nazis' pleasure. The oldest inhabitant of the Josephine-strasse was a Catholic priest, Father Stefan. He was over seventy and had been there four years, on a charge of helping a young communist to escape. The more fortunate knew that they would be released on a definite date. They were there for black-marketing, grumbling against the government listening to the enemy broadcasts, and other minor charges. A French Jew called Jules Renier lived in the next cell to Tomavich. He had been caught racketeering at Lille and was serving two years. He looked the most wretched of all the prisoners. He was as small as Tomavich. His head had been completely cropped, except for a grey stubble. His teeth were broken and discoloured, and he went about in a state of permanent terror, trying to obscure himself. Alan saw him darting glances at them from behind people's backs, and he was often on the verge of speaking to them. In all there were about two hundred prisoners. Nearly all of them were ill, and a few were dying.

One morning, after the German lesson, Tomavich said to Alan: 'You have capability. Your pronunciation is not bad. Your reading is excellent. You should now do some translation from English into German. Unfortunately we have no pencil.'

'Would Schleppner give us one?'

'Oh, no, it is against the regulations. They are afraid we will write messages and start a revolution. You could try. You are a British officer. Perhaps, if you brought one with you, they will allow you to have it back.'

'I did have a silver pencil. I gave it to the Russians, though.'

'Which Russians?'

'The ones who gave us the rings.'

'But I thought that was two years ago. Near Bremen, was it not?' the professor said slyly, and Alan saw his eyes twinkling, and knew that the ice was broken.

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'For Christ's sake, let's drop this bloody disguise,' Tug exclaimed. 'We trust you. Why the hell can't you trust us?'

'I do trust you,' said Tomavich. 'In the first days it was necessary to watch. You understand the position. You also were watching me.'

'Does that mean we're passed?' said Alan.

'Yes.'

'I wasn't going on much longer,' said Tug.

'I could see you were an Englishman,' Tomavich said. 'You leave your clothes in such a mess that you could not be German, and I was certain you could not be collaborators. Alan was more to be suspected.'

'Why me?'

Tomavich patted him on the arm. 'You are more observing. You are observing and absorbing all the time. I could tell at once, too, that you were not German. But I said to myself, I must watch. Now will you tell me your whole story?'

'You tell us yours.'

'Ah, there is your suspicion again. Very well. To show that that time is past, I will tell you mine. I warn you, I am very fond of talking. You must stop me when you have had enough.'

What a relief it was! Like a new lease of life, like the door being thrown open. The cloud of terror which hung over the world all round them scattered and the table they sat at became a patch of freedom.

Tomavich leant forward, glancing at the two of them affectionately, the points of his fingers pressed together; and Alan could imagine him wiping his monocle with a white silk handkerchief, and screwing it carefully into his eye, as he began to speak.

II

'I WAS a professor of history,' he said. 'I taught in many cities in the Balkan countries, but Belgrade is my birthplace and my home, and I am a Serb. I am fifty-five years old and here await-

ing sentence on the crime I am supposed to have committed in assisting my people to withstand the Germans. No charge has yet been brought against me. I have been in prison sixteen months and two weeks. In this prison I have been nearly a year.

'We all knew that our country was going to be invaded. We were under no illusions. I knew that I would have to make my own choice. The straits with which we, the liberal intellectuals of Europe, were faced were a stormy passage which you in England have never had to take; that terrible conflict between all and all, one extreme of violence and another extreme of violence, where those who remain undecided are torn in two or must go into exile destitute. What for you has been a mental disturbance to settle in leisure and tranquillity, for us has been an agony. We had no time to reason and deliberate. Events fell on us. We had to act.

'I was no longer happy in my lecture-rooms. The shadow of the German Air Squadrons overcast them. When in the morning I opened my newspaper, and there read how Doctor — Doctor! — Goebbels had justified such or such a violation of law and had imprisoned this or that eminent man, how could I possibly feel at ease? How could I go on talking in the calm way as of old? My students no longer wanted to listen to me. Some of them had turned fascist. Many Germans came to our city and seduced them. And others, among them the bravest and most intelligent, those whom I had singled out as the leaders of thought to come, disappeared. Where did they go? They joined the communists. Their organizations were forbidden and they and their families were in danger. Some the police took off to prison, but many had warnings. They vanished into the forests of Bosnia and Montenegro to wait their time. One by one little groups of my acquaintance, men in middle age, even old men, doctors, professors, lawyers, men in occupations like my own, began to follow them.

'I could not stay idle and I could not go abroad. Many of the noblest brains in Europe went abroad. I think sometimes of those famous men. I think of Einstein, and of others, who by virtue of their fame have discovered new homes and new

audiences across the Channel or across the Atlantic; and I remember the rest, lesser contributors to civilization, who have stayed or who have had to stay under the heel of those who hated them. I was never a famous professor. I wrote little. Sometimes I prepared a brief monograph or compiled an article. I was getting on in years and I am by no means a man of action. In the very early spring of 1941 I left Belgrade and went to the hills of Western Bosnia, guided by two of my own pupils, who were now my instructors and my leaders.

'Not many days later the Germans invaded our country. The King and some of the army made a belated effort at resistance. In a fortnight the Germans had conquered. From that time on I became a guerrilla fighter. I lived among men of a kind I had never met before. Mostly they called themselves communists, but the word covers multitudes. Their first task was to drive out the invaders, their second to introduce a social revolution on the model of the Russian, which would bring our backward peoples nearer the level of nations in the West. There were many very savage men; we are a savage and cruel race at times. Tortures were forbidden; but if tortures were committed, you must remember what the German and Italian invaders had done to us, devastating our villages, murdering our women and children and mutilating our men whom they took prisoner. We had something to avenge.

'My comrades were not all saints and heroes and I will not set them on a pinnacle. But they had many fine qualities in common and they were willing to sacrifice their lives for their ideals. It was a hard life, especially after the Italians had given over the areas in which we operated to the Germans. The Italians were cruel, but slothful, and many of their soldiers came over to our side even in those days. Nationality mattered little to us, and it is a great idea indeed that can subdue national hatreds in our part of the world. We had Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrins and even Bulgarians and Macedonians from the East. We had Catholics and we had children of the Orthodox Church, and there were many who had no church at all and did not want one.

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Most of our men were peasants and plain soldiers and I was proud to be their partner. They had the instinctive kindness of the very primitive and the very poor, as well as the ferocities. They were carved out of rock, near the heart of life. Many fought because they always had, and enjoyed it. Many of them consciously desired freedom and were fighting for it, so that one day they could use their minds. I who for forty years had been so busy with my mind, now had to use my hands and feet — oh, yes, often my feet — and that was as it should have been. I even took part in two small actions.

‘Sixteen months ago I was captured. We had been driven from Bosnia into Montenegro and then we had returned into Bosnia. We had to be three times careful, of the Italians, of the Germans, and of Mihailovich’s men, who hated us. I do not know the full story of his actions. I had always distrusted him, though in person he had attractive qualities and still has a following in our country. I never thought him the man to do what was needed for our people. I did not like his connexion with the conservatives in your country; we had intelligence of British and American business men whose support for him did not, we thought, coincide with what our country wanted. They say that he ceased to fight the Germans out of compassion, because of the reprisals which the Germans carried out against our villages whenever he undertook a raid, but I doubt if that was the only reason. I do not know. It was not his men who captured me. I am glad of that, because feelings were very bitter; so bitter, that we fought one another as much as we fought the foreigner.

‘We were coming back from a little reconnaissance we had done towards the coast, having heard of a mountain route by which arms might reach us. I, whom they usually left behind, had gone with the rest. We spent one night in a shack, high up among the mountains, where the snow was still lying deep. It belonged to one of our soldiers, and he was able to see his wife and procure us food. There must have been some treachery, for we had taken great care to cover our tracks. Before dawn we had the alarm that the Germans were drawing a net round us.

Our orders were not to fight them, but to return safely with our information. There were twenty-five of us and we scattered, each to find his way as best he could. I could not keep it up. I stumbled in the snowdrifts and did not know where I was going. My footsteps gave me away. I was very exhausted and rested beside a stream. When I tried to go on, I could scarcely move; and there they caught me, coming down from above on all sides and shooting their bullets near me into the snow, but not at me. They wanted me as their prisoner, and now they have me.'

There was a long pause. Alan and Tug sat looking furtively at the professor, thinking how little they themselves had sacrificed and suffered in the war. He looked ill and fragile and his brown eyes were nervous and seemed to vibrate. He need never have gone to the war. He was old and not a soldier. He could have lived somewhere in obscurity until it was all over.

'What will become of you?' said Tug awkwardly.

The professor looked at him at first without answering. They heard the city outside, and in the corridor the sentry's boots clumped past, returned and stopped. He shot back the wooden cover of the spy hole and peered in at them. Then he went away, his keys jangling, his boots clumping, then stopping at the next cell.

'I am one of the European intellectuals,' Tomavich said. 'One of those whom it is in the nazis' interest to destroy. We are the historians and teachers and scholars. We have fostered enlightened thought in our universities. We are the ones who, when our people are oppressed, recall to their mind their famous countrymen who in the past have written and conspired and struggled against tyranny. We remind them of the older revolutions, of Mazzini and Masaryk. The names of such great men, who in their day gave their lives for freedom in its contemporary political form, are an inspiration to later generations when the form has changed. Were it not for us, their memory might die and the darkness of oppression flow sullenly over our countries without resistance. The nationalism of the nineteenth century was one stage in the liberation of mankind. Those preliminary

explosions were explosions of the bourgeois. When the bourgeois revolution reached Russia it was carried rapidly onwards into the revolution of the people. We wish the same for our people and when that happens there will be no more frontiers.

'We don't look only to the past. We should prefer to be facing the future. It is only because so many countries have been invaded, so many national cultures trampled and insulted, that we return in thought to the nationalist uprisings of the last century. The Germans have compelled this. They have caused a great uprush of patriotic feeling all over Europe. I don't know to what dangers this may lead. The ideas towards which I and men like me were moving were international. The conception of freedom alters and extends. We think of the next stage and beyond the liberation of nations we strive for the elimination of nations. We want to unify Europe and finally the whole world. We are above frontiers. The culture we have studied and inhaled and treasured is not the property of any one race. It is part of the human endeavour to create and to be free. It springs from something more enduring than a nation.

'The Germans hate us because our understanding of the future is deeply and uncompromisingly opposed to theirs and greater than theirs and fresher than theirs. They are striving to unite Europe under a single race, as they call themselves. It cannot last, even if it can be achieved, because no one race or nation can make laws for or express or satisfy mankind. Before that can happen, all must merge. What is only a part of humanity can never contain or speak for the whole.

'So we are international, citizens of time and of the world, refusing to give in to these myths of predestined national conquest. To-day we are nationalist and patriotic, each one of us for his own country, because the German invasions have made us affectionate towards the territories in which we were born. After the war we shall go further forward. So the nazis cannot let our voices be heard. They have done their utmost to annihilate us.'

'Ivan and Mischa went to Yugoslavia,' said Tug, who had not

been listening to the professor's last remarks. 'I wish to Christ we had gone with them.'

'They were the Russians you met?' asked Tomavich.

'Yes. We nearly went with them. Why didn't we do it?'

'You would have made many friends there,' said Tomavich.

'What happened to you after you were captured?' Alan asked.

The professor folded his hands on the table. 'I think I've been fortunate,' he said. 'It has been far worse for others. At first I was put in a cell by myself and they left me five days without food. I thought I'd been forgotten. I was at the end of a long passage and no one ever came near me. I used to beat on the door, but nobody brought me food or told me what was to happen to me. It was done deliberately, I think. Others were left longer. After that I was given a little food, but the guard would not answer my questions and I had no other visitors. After three weeks they interrogated me. I was in a bad state by then mentally, and they used violence on me. Not serious violence, but enough to frighten me. I thought I would tell them everything, but suddenly they seemed to lose interest in me. I don't know why it was. Perhaps other people had been brought in.

'Later I was sent to hard labour. It was a favourite trick of the nazis to make men like myself work with their hands. Many died from exhaustion. Had we been in workshops, doing something in which we could have interested ourselves, the strain might not have been so great. But the nazis wanted to degrade and cow us and so they made us do work in which there was no point. We worked ten and twelve hours a day, digging trenches which later we filled in again. If we did not work we were beaten. There were about three hundred of us. I saw many scholarly men whom I had known before the war die under this treatment. There was Nicholas Ferocek.'

Alan and Tug waited for him to go on. His hands twisted and he had difficulty in speaking.

'You won't know the name,' he said. 'Doctor Ferocek was a lecturer in international law. When I arrived at this place he was already dying. I was taken to see him. He was lying on a

bunk covered by a blanket such as you throw over a horse, but full of lice and holes. I couldn't recognize him. He seemed to be hundreds of years old. His skin was drawn so tightly over his bones that his face seemed to be cracking. His arms and legs were like twigs. His teeth had decomposed and the stench that came from him was unbearable. He had had no medical attention. I don't know what he was dying of. Starvation, exhaustion, indifference. There were men with him in the hut, who had suffered less and were trying to attend to him. They raised him when I came in, and I think he recognized me. But he could not speak and they lowered him again, like a bundle of rubbish, and he lay there staring at the roof. He died three days later and his body was thrown into a pit.'

Tomavich tried to make his voice matter-of-fact. He wanted to show that what he had seen was the truth and that it was nothing exceptional; but he could not give the impression that he had grown used to it. His voice trembled and seemed to dry up. Later in the day Alan asked him: 'What do you think will become of you?'

'I wish only to be forgotten,' said Tomavich. 'If I can be forgotten, then I shall be alive when the war ends. I don't know why they sent me here. This prison is not as bad as the others. I don't know why they didn't leave me to die like Nicholas Ferocek. There seems to be no reason for our movements. I don't know why they have suddenly taken Eulenstein away. I wish they would tell us what they are going to do with us. Is it all Englishmen in the place you came from?'

'No,' said Alan. 'All nationalities. There were some Serbs there.'

'Serbs! What are their names? Where were they captured?'

'They were caught with Mihailovich.'

'Ah.' The hope went out of Tomavich's voice. 'I was thinking they might send me there.'

'They might,' said Alan.

'Not if you have men from Mihailovich. They wouldn't put us together, you see. We here are the dangerous ones. You were sent here because they think you are dangerous. Your castle is

not for the really dangerous ones. When they have found out that you are only prisoners of war, then they will send you back there.'

Alan knew what Tomavich was thinking. He was imagining the castle with its books and its parcels and its visits from the Red Cross. He asked questions about it.

'I expect you had plenty of discussions there,' he said.

'A certain amount,' said Alan.

'And you had books?'

'Yes,' said Alan.

'All languages? Or only English?'

'All languages.'

'So you read, and you discussed. What else did you do?'

'People played cards a lot.'

'Ah, yes.'

'Couldn't we get a pack here?' Tug asked.

'It is hard,' Tomavich replied. 'It is possible Eulenstein would bring some. What else did you do in Schloss Durheim?'

'Oh, there were lectures.'

'Lectures! On what subjects?'

'All kinds of subjects. Agriculture. Sport. Different people's jobs. Then we had a good many technical courses going on. I started a course on business training. It was something to do.'

'Yes, that would be useful,' said Tomavich in a disappointed tone. 'But were there no political discussions? No controversies? Surely you didn't manage to avoid that?'

'No. There was a good deal of that. I wouldn't say there was anything very interesting.'

'Bloody boring, most of it,' said Tug. 'None of us knew anything about it.'

'You should have been there, Professor,' Alan said. 'You'd have had to give at least a dozen lectures. There'd have been a big demand for you.'

He could picture Tomavich in his element, in the big dining-room where the lectures and the church services were held, leaning on the pulpit which was used as a desk and screwing

into his eye a monocle attached to a black cord. Laharpe had a monocle; Tomavich could have borrowed it.

'I should like to go there,' the professor said wistfully. 'I should make it like a university. I know now that no one should go to the university until he has experienced life. At Schloss Durheim you will all have experienced life. It would be ideal.' The idea excited him. 'We should do history and political theory.' He leant forward, dreaming of his class-room and his pupils. 'We should not talk only of the past. I made that mistake before. We should describe things as they are to-day. No doubt there are experts there? Business men? Practical men?'

'A few,' said Alan. 'Rather out of date.'

'Never mind. They are English. They are practical and I am all theory. We should build up a picture of a new England, of a new Europe, of a new world. We should have many arguments. I am accustomed to such arguments. I had many before the war. I have had many here with Count Eulenstein. He always loses.'

'Yes,' said Alan slowly. 'We could have done that in the castle.'

'How did the Germans treat you there?' said Tomavich.

'They paid very little attention to us. We seldom saw them. It's strange,' Alan went on, as if to himself, 'the castle was supposed to be a punishment camp.'

Tomavich unclasped his hands.

'There are many degrees in prison,' he said.

'There were better camps than your castle, where they can go for walks and play games. And then there is your castle. And then there is this prison here, which was once used for civilians, and which is bad, but not very bad. And then there is the camp where I was sent before I came here. And then there are the forgotten places, where people are massacred in thousands, or die slowly, individually, under torture.'

Sitting at the table, in the waning light, he told them about the concentration camps. He told them about the mass executions and the torture chambers and the gas chambers. He told them of a place in Poland. When the batches of victims arrived

there, they found a country house, where they were given a meal, and a band playing on the lawn. After they had eaten the meal and listened to the band they were asked to strip and get ready for a bath. They were given a post card on which they could write to tell their friends and families that they were being well treated. They were taken in groups of twenty into the bathroom, and there gassed or scalded to death. He told them about a Jew, a merchant from Amsterdam, who had had a cord tied round his genitals and then been thrown from a window. He told them of things he had seen himself; faces so beaten that the eyes had disappeared and the features were a mass of pulp, and bodies in which every bone had been broken. In one camp it had been his duty for a short time to unload heavy trucks, forty or fifty tons in weight. He had to work twelve hours a day and had only one meal of soup. He had known that if he stayed there he would die. At this camp men who disobeyed orders or offended the guards were locked in cells the size of a cupboard, in which they could neither lie nor sit and where there was no light. Often the Germans forgot about them and they were left there for many days. When the door was opened they fell straight forward on to their faces. He told them of the screams he used to hear at night and his eternal terror that one day the torturers would come to him. There had been little organized brutality, he said, in the Josephine-strasse, but people were dying of neglect.

‘Vrede has consumption,’ he said. ‘If the war goes on another year he won’t last. You can tell from his high complexion. For him it is going to be a race. Schulz is cruel. There was a Russian officer here last winter. Schulz took a dislike to him. You remember how cold it was. Schulz found an empty cell and one night, when it was freezing, he had the walls and floor sprayed and when it had frozen hard he put the Russian officer in there naked for the night. Next morning he was dead. I saw that. I know that happened myself.’

‘Bastards!’ Tug burst out. ‘Bastards! The whole nation ought to be exterminated. Every single f—— one of them.’

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'Some of us would wish to do that,' Tomavich said. 'I am not one who wishes to destroy them all. I don't blame them all. Those who have done wicked things must be punished, punished, punished!' he repeated fiercely, 'and in the way they have punished others. Many of the innocent will suffer. It will happen, and I shall not be the fool to step between. But I would not set out to punish all.'

'Why should they get away with it? Any of them. Why should they? They could have stopped it. They're all responsible.'

'No,' said Tomavich. 'Not all. There are degrees, and there are excuses, and many have been mere victims.' He smiled at Tug. 'I am sure you are not speaking with the voice of your country. It is usually England's fault to treat her enemies too kindly.'

'It's time we went to the opposite extreme, then.'

'Much will be taken out of your hands, or will never be in your hands. The voice of England does not reach into the forests and the hill-villages where hundreds have been murdered and hundreds will be killed in revenge. But I should not wish to punish all. No.'

'What do you want to do?' Alan asked.

'Shall we talk of that another time? Perhaps Count Eulenstein will return and then we shall have arguments.'

'Doesn't he agree with you?'

'Ah, no. How could he? I see you know very little of Europe. Well, you have heard my story. Now tell me yours.'

So, between them, Alan and Tug told him, right from the first days when they landed in France and Norway, until the moment when they were interrogated in the office of the Josephine-strasse; and they became friends.

III

WHEN Alan heard Tomavich speaking of the horrors he had witnessed and been through, and looked at the emaciated man with his grey face and frightened eyes, he felt utterly ashamed.

He remembered the castle; and all the grievances that they had had there seemed to be very trivial. He remembered England, unoccupied, bombed but not devastated and not enslaved, and he thought of the anguish of Europe. He remembered the British newspapers before the war, in which accounts of the massacres and concentration camps had been published, and how people had turned a blind eye and a deaf ear, not wanting to be disquieted. Many of them, and he among them, if they thought about it at all, had refused to believe that any of this mattered; anyhow there was nothing to be done about it. It did matter. It was at least as true a picture of existence in the contemporary world as the security and surface comforts of England. Poverty and misery were the lot of more than half the Continent; torture, imprisonment and death the lot of people who wanted to end them. There were many disgraces in England; but contrasted with Europe it was like the castle contrasted with the Josephine-strasse, a health resort.

During all the time he was in the Josephine-strasse he suffered from hunger and strain. He could not imagine how Tomavich had put up with it for so long without losing his senses. That some men had been living under such conditions for five, six, even ten years, was past belief. He was glad to be going through a little of it himself. He looked across the cell at Tomavich, lying relaxed on his bunk with his eyes closed; or he trudged down to the yard in the deepening snow with the file of exhausted men, and he felt proud to be one of them. It was time that he understood what was really happening; until now he had been a passenger in life. Resignation was the danger now. When listening to Tomavich's descriptions he reached a point where he could no longer react, where he was incapable of being shocked; it was as though something fundamental were lacking in him, or had been taken from him, almost as though he had lost the capacity to hate or to love, or to have any strong emotion.

Tug was roused to sudden fits of fury. He wanted to do something at once. He used to get up late at night and sit at the table with his head in his hands. In the daytime he strode up and

down the cell, kicking the bedposts. He had wild ideas about escaping and kept on examining the window.

'It's waste of time, Tug,' said Tomavich.

'They said that at Durheim. We got away all the same.'

'My advice is to forget about it. You're young, you don't want to risk your life needlessly.'

'It wouldn't be needless. If I got home I could tell them about this place.'

'I expect they know. There's nothing to be done about it.'

All the same Tug continued to think out schemes, all imaginative, all hopeless. He glowered at Schleppner and spoke curtly to Tomavich.

'Why did you say Eulenstein had gone?' he asked.

'I think they hoped he might collaborate.'

'Will he?'

'No. He is brave and he is too proud. Besides, they've tried it with him before.'

'He could pretend he was going to,' Tug said, 'and then he could get across the frontier. They couldn't watch him the whole time.'

'Could they not? You don't know them, Tug.'

'Supposing they asked Alan and me to collaborate . . .'

'No, no, no!' Tomavich interrupted. 'You mustn't start thinking in that way. Don't try to be too clever,' he said insistently, tapping on the table and looking very worried. 'It is bad here, but you are alive.' He shook his head; in his own distress he must have had Tug's thought himself. 'Yes, Count Eulenstein will come back,' he said. 'His courage is the courage of pride. He is a fine man. His family history is one of the most remarkable in Europe. His ancestor helped Sobieski to drive the Turks from Vienna. His grandfather . . .'

Tomavich told them all about the Eulenstein family. They were Counts of the Holy Roman Empire, they had several castles in Austria, and a palace in Vienna. . . .

'Have you never been to Vienna? Well, after the war I will show you, if there is anything left of it. We shall see the Eulen-

stein palace together. It will be a public building then. It is a wonderful place. I have been there once, and I nearly lost myself. There is a chapel, with an altar-piece by Nicholas Cranach, and in every room there are relics of saints. It is a very old Catholic family. Count Eulenstein is still most devout. He says his prayers every night. His religion is another part of his courage. But he will never have his palace nor his castles back. Hans Stromers will see to that.'

'Why won't he?' said Tug.

'His ideas are finished. They are fossilized. He wants to restore the past, arch for arch, stone for stone. He is a fossil himself, though a very handsome one. You will observe his face. It is carved, immobile. His mouth is perfectly formed, his nose is Roman, his eyebrows are two perfect semi-circles, and behind it there is nothing. Nothing but good taste. All his ancestors must have looked like that, but rougher and more cunning, and he is the final work, with all the passion gone. It is a face whose petrification fascinates me. A face without a future.'

A rumour went round the prison that Eulenstein would soon be returning. Tomavich did not know the source. News came in about once a week. Stromers had something to do with it and Alan supposed it was brought by a friendly German. Rumours of course grew rampantly, as in the castle, passing along the chain of men on their walk or in the wash-house at dawn. The other prisoners had become friendly to Alan and Tug, now they knew they could trust them. They smiled at them and whispered, 'When will the invasion start? How long will it last? What are you here for?' But Stromers remained hostile. Tomavich said he did not like anybody, and everyone was afraid of him.

One day Tug asked Tomavich if he knew where Schulz lived.

'Why?' Tomavich asked.

'I should like to know, that's all.'

'He lives here in Munich, in the Theresienstrasse. Stromers knows all about it. He will be taken care of, if any of us ever gets the chance.'

Alan knew what Tug was thinking. He wanted to take part

in the revenge. Neither of them had forgotten the story about Schulz and the Russian officer. Tug even wished that some brutal thing would be done to him, so that he could have something in common with the others. It was harder for Tug than for Alan, who knew how to be patient. Alan had more common sense. He saw that they were powerless. Individual action, at that moment, could achieve nothing. Bigger problems were coming to the forefront of his mind. He asked himself how these appalling things had happened; the answer was not a matter of months, but of years, perhaps a lifetime. He liked to hear Tomavich talking. Tomavich had become fond of him. He called them his first English pupils and often referred to the hope of being one day taken to Schloss Durheim, where he would give lectures and have a school.

'What would you tell them there?' Alan asked.

'At first nothing. I should only ask them for what they had been fighting.'

'Self-preservation,' Tug said.

'Yes,' said the professor. 'That is the first thing.' He cleared his throat and blew his nose. 'We have all been thrown on to the defensive. Liberty has had a recoil. But don't let us lose the initiative because of that. There are greater forces than self-defence. Remember your real enemies.'

'I have not been fighting for Serbia only, nor for Yugoslavia only. I love my country, as you love yours, and as you would love mine if you could visit there; the forests, the coloured mountains, and the little villages perched above the hot blue sea. But all countries have their beautiful places. All countries are homes, which those who are in exile remember with affection. Now an earthquake has come, and the war has seized your body and dragged you to unfamiliar places, to France, Norway, to Schloss Durheim, and so to Munich and the Josephine-strasse. Let it seize your mind also, drawing you away from the snug assurances of your youth.'

'The character of the war has never changed, though for some who look at it without reflection it may appear so. It began

under the disguise of a conflict between nations. But now the duellers have slashed away their masks and a truer part of its character is exposed naked. The forces which exploded in the war could not possibly have been changed during the last year or two. No, it is the perception of those fighting which has changed and become more penetrating, so that greater numbers can now discern, underneath the subsidiary struggle of nations, the universal struggle between the possessors and those who do not possess, regardless of their nation. A class war is often spoken of. It is a convenient phrase, and though stale, not inaccurate.

'Deeper than that class war lies the eternal conflict between old habits and new inventions, new ideas. These habits are the crusts and fungus which accumulate in a class society, turning men who were once revolutionary and fresh into weary reactionaries, as each new force in turn rises from underneath. The air becomes charged and oppressive, like one of those leaden days in summer or one of those winter days when the sky is thick with snow not yet fallen. People know that there is going to be an outburst and many of them desire it. The ingredients of this mood are very complicated. At present, the principal explosion is one of class against class; and that is the struggle revealed under the struggle between nations, as the war develops. When, during the approaching generations, this explosion has worn itself out, and the echo has died down, and the classes as they now are have disappeared, there will still be the conflict between habit and invention, the established and the new, the old and the young. What form it will take I can't foretell, and at present I don't bother about it.

'You left England as the defenders of England, but in what mood will you return? The war will have taken you and imprinted its character upon you. The great climax of the last war was not, as we have seen by now, the Treaty or the League. It was the Russian Revolution, by which the fundamental struggle between classes was solved once and for all, as I hope, for one vast area of the world. This was the positive current. Germany became the nucleus of reaction, called fascism. That

was the negative current. Your country nearly sided with Germany. Now it is moving slowly towards the positive attitude, towards advance. Will it continue? Have you in England the fervour which we in our new countries have to transform the world? Ask yourselves.

'You fought for self-preservation, as Tug said. This answer will serve well enough for a while. But the guilt is wearing off it. As you take down the defences on your beaches, and hear less often the sirens at night, and wait poised along your coasts to launch yourselves upon the Continent, surely, there must be many of you who say to yourselves, the defensive stage is past, in our hearts as in our strategy, and for what are we undertaking this offensive? It is then that the old dilemma presents itself. Each must resolve for himself whether he has been fighting to create something new, or to maintain what he had in the past. If he has been fighting for something new, then he is on the side of the people of the world, because it was the people who suffered under the previous dispensation. If he has been fighting to maintain what he had in the past, then he is by implication against the people, since in the past he thrived at the people's expense, whether he knew it or not. The nature of his patriotism becomes evident. It was love of a society in which he himself enjoyed a favourable position.

'I was disappointed to hear that you seldom discussed these matters in your castle. Perhaps you will say I talk too much myself, but your arrival has excited me. I had hoped that this gigantic war would have shaken everybody. A prison, with books and young and civilized companions, could be an excellent retreat in which to collect one's thoughts before emerging into the distractions of peace. I know England a little. Formerly I taught in the tradition of Western civilization. I visited London and Paris, and drank port in your panelled Oxford colleges, and sipped aperitifs at marble-topped tables in French university towns. I signed my name at the foot of manifestos calling for intellectual co-operation and appealing to the spirit of Locke and Voltaire, Goethe and Rousseau. In the thirties many of us looked

westwards for a lead, but none came. You can hardly wonder that we turned to Russia.'

'What did you find there?' Alan asked.

'I found an idea, an unselfishness of which you in England are in need. People are already saying that the idea has been betrayed. I have no evidence to convince me that this is so. Many people are afraid of the idea and would like it to be betrayed. The hope of brotherhood remains, however. It is part of the human heart. It had been sinking. The Russians have brought it to the surface again, and it will need all of us to keep it there.'

IV

IN December Stromers told Tomavich, while they were fallen in in the court-yard, that Count Eulenstein was returning that week.

'It is possible he will have news of our party,' said the professor.

'Nobody will have trusted him,' said Stromers. 'All the same, find out what he has to say and let me know.'

'Very good.'

Stromers looked at Alan and Tug.

'Well, how are you getting on?'

'All right.'

'You're in good company. Has Tomavich been talking to you?'

'Every day.'

'And night too, I shouldn't wonder. You'll get Eulenstein next. He'll be in your cell.'

A whistle blew and they moved off round the yard. Stromers said over his shoulder:

'When's your invasion coming?'

'In the spring, I expect.'

'High time.'

It was the first time he had spoken civilly to either of them, and he did not speak to them again for several days.

After the walk was over they went up the stone stairs to fetch

their bowls and collect their afternoon's soup. Schleppner ladled it out. There was a good deal of chaffing and Alan noticed that some of the prisoners received more than others. Renier, the French Jew, received considerably less. He remained there, leaning forward and holding out the bowl.

'What are you waiting for?' shouted Schleppner.

'I haven't got my share.'

'If you want more, you should know where to get it,' Schleppner said, and some of the prisoners laughed at this reference to Renier's career on the black market. Renier began to whine.

'Come on, get out!' Schleppner shouted. 'Or you won't have any at all.'

He liked to torment the unfortunate Jew, whom he knew to be unpopular. Sometimes he gave him short rations. Sometimes he made a point of giving him an extra large ration.

'Look what I'm allowing you,' he would say. 'You can't complain now, can you?'

And as he poured it in, he touched Renier's fingers with the boiling ladle, so that Renier spilt half his soup.

'I don't like Schleppner,' Tug said. 'I don't like him at all.'

'He's a fool, really,' Tomavich said. 'On the whole, he hasn't treated us badly. He'll change quickly enough at the end of the war. He used to be very respectful to Eulenstein, because he thought Eulenstein might be let out and collaborate. Now he's paying his court to Stromers. Renier's a nobody; so he can do what he likes with him.'

'I don't think Stromers likes us,' Alan said.

'He doesn't trust Englishmen. It was he who told me to say nothing to you at first. Not that I needed telling. We were very careful of Englishmen, even when they were dropped by parachute to fight with us.'

'Why?' Tug said.

'Because you supported Mihailovich.'

'Why shouldn't we?'

'He is . . .'

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'A fascist, I suppose? Whenever they don't like anybody people say he's a fascist. It's bloody nonsense.'

Tomavich saw that Tug was becoming argumentative and changed the subject.

'If only we could arrange some welcome for Eulenstein!' he exclaimed. 'Still, two young Englishmen will be a pleasant surprise. He will have plenty to tell us.'

'I suppose he'll suspect us too,' said Alan.

'Naturally. One suspects all strangers. But I shall explain to him.'

'I'll sleep this morning,' Tug said. 'I had a bad night.'

Alan and Tomavich sat on the hard chairs, facing each other across the table, and Tug pulled the thin blankets over him and turned to the wall. The professor's right hand fumbled at his breast pocket. This gesture made Alan smile. Tomavich was groping for his monocle. Alan knew he wanted to talk, and let him go on at first without listening. He could not concentrate. It was all such a pretence. They were in prison and that was the only thing that mattered. There was the locked door and the barred window. The talk was just something to pass the time. It did Tomavich good, because he had been alone too long. But the cell was cold, the heating hardly seemed to penetrate, and Alan had a pain in his stomach. He kept on wondering if they had been forgotten. Surely, by now, their identity must have been established. He felt he ought not to have such thoughts. He ought to put up with it, like the others. All the same he was English, a prisoner of war under an international treaty, and he wanted to go to the Germans and insist that they should be sent back to Durheim. Half-heartedly he heard what Tomavich was saying.

'We use the word fascism a great deal nowadays. I wonder if all who use it mean the same thing by it. I wonder if some of them mean anything at all. It has had a clear meaning in my own mind; and since all of us are now officially said to be fighting against it, it would be as well to agree on our interpretation, or at all events, to put one forward on which to disagree.'

'The fascist society is a volcano. It is vast and compact and it has power, but it suppresses huge forces and makes no arrangements for their gradual release. Its power is that of the compressed and not of the liberated. It is, of course, a class state. Explosions become inevitable; either a war or a revolution. The lava of war destroys everything underneath the volcano. The eruption of revolution causes the volcano itself to collapse.

'Fascism is feudalism in its modern form. The gaps between classes are less glaring and the inequalities of wealth are less conspicuous, but in a fascist country, and in the imagination of fascists, lingers that same vision of a tiered and terraced State, which served very well for the Middle Ages. It is very picturesque to yearn for that ancient balance, real or imagined, when all moved in their ordained spheres, landlord, merchant, peasant, artisan; when no member of the State sought to infringe the province of another member, but all worked harmoniously within the whole, like the limbs of the body, breathed into by God through the lips of the Roman Catholic Church. It appeals to romantic people dreaming of the lost past. It appeals to those who fear the masses and want something to distract them. The paternal State! It has changed its form as man's command over nature has changed, but in each epoch the State has been considered as something separate from the people, doling them out a concession here, a right there, but always separate from and above them, like a landowner with his grateful dependants.'

'Why should we believe all this?' Tug said abruptly. Alan had thought he was asleep.

The professor stopped and frowned. 'Excuse me?'

'Why should we take all this in?' Tug said irritably. 'You go on with your theories and we just have to accept them.'

'You are under no compulsion.'

'You talk as if we were.'

'I do not mean to give that impression,' Tomavich said, licking his lips. He was nonplussed, and annoyed at being interrupted.

'You do give it, though, you know. I don't believe everything is so simple.'

'It is necessary to see it simply, first. The complications will appear later. The struggle through history to achieve a free society is not difficult to detect.'

'It depends what you mean by a free society.'

'That is precisely what I am trying to explain,' said the professor, nettled.

'England is free. You can say what you like. In Russia you have to be a communist.'

'You said you felt cramped in England, Tug,' Alan remarked. 'What's made you change?'

'I haven't changed,' Tug said, still looking at the wall. 'All that's true enough. I don't know if it's any better, that's all, in Russia.'

'I was trying to explain . . . ' Tomavich began.

'I heard you. As a matter of fact, I was trying to go to sleep.'

'Leave him,' said Alan. 'He'll be O.K. soon.'

'No, I am worried,' said the professor. 'You are discontented with England, Tug, and you are intolerant of Russia . . . '

'I don't say that. I just don't know.'

'What about Ivan and Mischa?' Alan asked. 'Didn't you like them?'

'Of course I liked them. They're not the whole of Russia though.'

'Where would you like to go?' Tomavich asked.

'I told Alan. I'd like to go back to Canada, or Australia, or somewhere where there's some room.'

'There is room in Russia.'

'If you agree with the Russians. Supposing you don't? I want to go somewhere where I don't have to agree with anyone.'

'I am trying to explain, so that you may have a chance of agreeing. I don't know if Alan agrees,' he said. 'Elucidation is necessary. Besides, I do not approve of your idea to leave your own country, merely because there will be a period of conflict there. It is your responsibility to help.'

'That's what you think,' Tug said brusquely. It was one of his worst days. He did not even bother to look at them. 'If you ask me, none of it's worth helping.'

'Then you will be running away.'

'Possibly. Anyhow, it's all such a bloody farce here. What the hell can we do?'

'Nothing now. Afterwards, the ideas will germinate. I have some of the ideas,' said Tomavich, watching Alan all the time to see the effect on him. 'You are the young man of action.'

'I don't see that it matters, anyhow,' said Tug. 'Unless you can produce an idea to get me out of this place. I'll act on that all right.' He pulled the blankets closer round him and had no more to say. Tomavich did not smile. He sat in silence and then opened his hands in a gesture of despair.

'Perhaps there is no point in continuing,' he said to Alan.

'Don't worry about him. Go on.'

'Do you understand what I am trying to do?'

'I think so.'

'Do you agree?'

'I haven't had time to work it out.'

The professor still sat morosely, looking at the table. 'Tug is right,' he said after a while. 'You should not accept all I say. You should question. Question, examine, dissect always, but a time must come when you must act. Thought is the herald of action. Already a voice will be saying to you, what am I going to do: I have met so many men who think, think, think all the time, and are for ever objecting, and qualifying, and modifying, so that nothing is done.'

'You go ahead,' said Alan.

'Doesn't he want to sleep?'

'He can sleep all right.'

'Very well.' But for some minutes Tomavich was off colour, and soon he stopped, frowning and clicking his teeth. 'How easy it is for me to talk!' he said. 'It is my profession. I can do it anywhere, and I forget about others, who do not care for it. I become annoyed with those who are not immediately of my mind. Yet what I see now, I see only after long complications when my wits were blunted, or else too highly refined. There is a danger of inertia in extreme precision.'

'You go on with what you were saying,' Alan said.

Tomavich smiled. 'So at least I have one good listener.'

'I'm used to it. I was brought up in the Presbyterian Church. Our sermons at home usually lasted three-quarters of an hour.'

Tomavich laughed. He dropped his voice.

'Where were we? Ah, yes. The paternal State. Those who consider that government should be vested in an organization separate from and not at one with the masses have fascist tendencies, which the energetic fascists will exploit. The relation of landowner to tenant and labourer cannot continue to be the model for society. Yet this is the model which many intelligent people still respect. The nobility in the last century thought it might be an answer to the curses of the factories. We are the natural leaders, they said, and not these traders and business men, who have never learnt the corporate responsibility we learnt on our estates, and who have no personal contact with the people. Later, the business men thought it was the answer to the curses of industrial unrest, socialism, communism. Let us look after the people like the benevolent landowners of old, they said. Let us give them better houses, better health, a little more education, but in ideas which we approve, and they will not listen to agitators.

'This attitude is the attitude of fascism. Bismarck's State was a fascist State. How cunning and adroit he was! You remember? Socialism was rife in the German cities. Revolution was threatened. A student had emptied his revolver into the body of the Emperor . . . Wilhelm I, the father of his people! What was Bismarck's reply? The old reply, Alan. *Panem et circenses*. Suppression and concession. In a short time all movements and meetings of the people had been forbidden. In a few years the working class had been handed social benefits on a scale no other country had even imagined. No more trade unions, but insurance against accident. No political liberty, but old age pensions. No free speech, but quite a supply of free medicines. Universal suffrage, but no final power. Bismarck adapted the paternally governed society to suit an industrial age. Disraeli in your country wanted to do the same, but he never had the power.

Bismarck's State was the industrial descendant of feudalism and the ancestor of fascism.

'Bismarck was a landlord and the friend of landlords. Disraeli's corduroys were those of the intellectual rather than the countryman, but he too was the mouthpiece of squires and landed aristocracy. Neither was a business man, and business men resented their intervention, permitting it only in order to avoid greater dangers from below. It was the beginning of a dramatic change. In our time the business men no longer think of the State as a poacher; they want it as a gamekeeper. Nothing can keep quiet the voice of the people; the people are encamped round their preserves, no longer gipsies but an army. The world has been industrialized and national industries have been calling for protection. So there have been higher tariffs, larger subsidies, legalized monopolies, and the State has become the servant of the captains of industry. In Germany Bismarck's methods have been used again in order to perpetuate the vertical and unequal State. How, except in degree, have Hitler's actions differed? The trade unions abolished. Communism and socialism forbidden. Free expression of opinion extinguished. The tide of liberty set back. And in return, better roads, people's cars, more free doctors, organized holidays, tickets to the opera for good workers, chamber music in armaments factories during the lunch hour. The State no longer intervenes to protect industry against itself, or in the interest of industry. The State is industry, and the masses are something separate. It is not reaction, but revulsion. Millions, doubtless, were happy under the nazis, in the first years. Happy, but dulled. Happy possibly because dulled.

'If you ask me how this has been possible, I can answer you briefly with my own suggestions. The reason is not that Germany has lacked freedom-loving men. Germany for many years was the stronghold of socialism and communism; for many years the people of Europe put their hope in her. There is a spring of energy in Germany for ever rising. You cannot exclude seventy million people from the common impulse which makes all men crave freedom, unless you are an ignoramus, or a propa-

gandist like your Lord Vansittart. Of course the Germans have craved freedom. Think of Marx, Bebel, Lassalle, Liebknecht, Ossietzky! Men have longed to break their chains there as everywhere; but circumstances, and particularly geographic circumstances, have made it possible for their enemies at home to keep them fettered. A country which either is threatened, or fancies itself threatened, by foreign neighbours can easily be deterred from social advance. This has been the catastrophe of Germany. Professional soldiers, landlords scared for their estates, business men scared for their businesses and protective tariffs, officials scared for their little position, the bourgeoisie scared they hardly know why, have always been able to drown the people's demands for freedom at home by ringing the alarm abroad. Most of their great reforms, particularly in health and agriculture, have been carried out for military reasons. National liberty, not the people's liberty, has been the cry. There has been a vast perversion.

'France was once the enemy. Napoleon's armies brought new thoughts with them across Europe, and the thoughts took root. But because they were invading armies, they left hatred behind them as well, hatred and fear, which the kings, the nobility, the generals, could exploit against the eagerness to revolt. How, it was asked, could disunited nations resist their neighbours? How could they afford reforms and parliaments? There were great German liberals, who believed in the last century that the German States could be merged by negotiation into a parliamentary empire on the French or British model. The soldiers and the Tories said that this would be to invite attack. France was the model, and France was the bogey. And so, when unity came, it came by force. The empire which emerged under Bismarck was a despotism; and the liberals, who had refused him money for his wars, came fawning to him after his triumphs and gave him the money, and changed their name to National Liberals.

'When you and the French signed the Treaty of Versailles, you put a perfect weapon of perversion into the Germans' hands. What chance had the socialists and the communists then? The Kaiser had gone, but there were still the soldiers and the business

men and the nobility to summon up the spectre of insulted national honour. Hitler could say, as Bismarck said, that a parliamentary State invited attack. They could use all the old foreign arguments to crush liberty at home. I needn't remind you how the nazis used and are still using the fear of Russia to bolster up their own tyrannies. You will have read the German newspapers in your castle; you will have seen for yourself. France no longer draws towards herself the eyes of those who wish to be free, and France is no longer a boggy. In our own time it has been Russia towards whom millions have looked, and Russia that has been the boggy. So what has happened? Now we have *National Socialists*. First *National Liberals*, now *National Socialists*. The so-called freedom of the nation twisting and destroying the greater freedom.

'It has been the same, less violently, in your own country. I see in England a striking continuity of aspiration and achievement, tending inevitably, if sedately, towards equality. Freedom, in the political sense, you have already. In the economic sense, not yet. You too, like every other nation, have been held back by threats from abroad. Nationalism, provoked, either spuriously in the interests of the powerful or genuinely by some real danger, has delayed and deflected your improvers. It is so easy for people to say "Now is no time for reforms, unless we want to be invaded"; and of course, if they don't want the reforms, they are sure to say it.

'But after this war shall we not all be free of these anxieties? Shall we not be able to go ahead? From what direction would you, for example, fear attack? From France? What an idea! From America? Absurd. From Germany? You will not leave her the means. Are you going to be afraid of Russia? I am not. You can say that I am persuading myself. You can say that I hope in Russia out of pure despair. You will be wrong, I think, but you must look into it yourself. You will perhaps feel another breath of freedom blowing from the east to join the wind that blows from the sea across England. You may hear something sounding in Russia to which you have an echo of your own.'

DR. TOMAVICH

Alan did not answer. Already that echo was stirred. He was thinking of Ivan and Mischa.

Good-bye, comrade . . .

We're going to Yugoslavia, to the fighting . . .

These bicycles are for you . . . These rings are for you . . .

There are no good nations and no bad nations. There are good men and there are bad men . . .

He looked at the sleeping Tug, who refused to be swept away by the professor. Something in himself still resisted; something not at all cynical, but careful, infinitely painstaking. Tomavich smiled, detecting and not resenting it.

The keys rattled outside. Schleppner threw open the door noisily and announced facetiously, 'His Excellency has come back.'

Count Eulenstein entered.

V

ALAN was amazed with his first impression of Count Eulenstein. He wore a leather jacket, belted, with a fur collar open at the neck, a clean white shirt and a blue silk tie, and he was carrying an expensive leather suitcase.

'Well, Tomavich, how are you?' he said, a little too effusively, coming forward with his hand outstretched, and he looked at Alan and Tug, waiting to be introduced. 'I heard there were two Englishmen. This is a real honour.'

He put the suitcase on the empty bunk above Tomavich's.

'So they've allowed you to bring some things in?'

'Yes, and I have not forgotten you. I have shirts and underclothes. And a pack of cards. And three books.'

Tomavich's eyes lit up. Eulenstein turned to Alan: 'If only I had known you were here, I could have brought more.'

'What happened?' Tomavich asked.

'Yes, I will tell you it all. It has been interesting. Very interesting.'

YES, FAREWELL

Alan thought his gaiety affected. He must have prepared it well in advance, and it would not last. He was very tall. His face was exactly as Tomavich had described it; more of a façade than a face, handsome and aristocratic and static. His eyebrows were really astonishing, two arching semi-circles, raised by some ancestor in polite surprise, and held there ever since. His nose was like a buttress. He had thick grey hair, and his head reminded Alan of a cathedral.

He unpacked his valise on to his palliasse, setting the books and the coloured silk handkerchiefs and warm shirts out in rows, transfiguring the cell.

'Here you are, Professor . . .'

'But I can't take this. Give it to one of the lads . . .'

'Go on, it is for you.'

'Where did you get it all?'

'Where do you think? They took me home and some of my people were still there. They prepared it for me.'

'So they took you to your home?'

'Certainly. They spared no pains. I was quite an important person for a short time.'

He sat at the table with Alan and Tomavich on either side. Tug leant against a bunk, staring at him with astonishment. Tug's haphazard versatile features were the complete opposite of Eulenstein; Tug with his untidy hair, Tug never at rest, and Count Eulenstein, permanently becalmed.

Eulenstein said something rapidly to Tomavich, and Alan guessed that he was asking if they had been approved.

'You are prisoners of war, are you not?' he asked. 'Not political prisoners?'

'No, prisoners of war.'

'Tell him your story, Alan,' Tomavich said.

'Wouldn't his be more interesting?'

'It will take some time. To-morrow would be more suitable . . . Alan . . .'

'Alan Maclaren. And Tug Wilson.'

'Maclaren and Wilson.' Count Eulenstein took them in, his

eyes pausing for a moment at Tug's unlaced boots and grubby nails. 'It will be refreshing to hear news of England. My wife and family are there. When were you last in England?'

'Neither of us since 1940.'

'My family have been there since 1938. Lord Rentoul was kind enough to put a small house at their disposal, and my two boys are at school in England. I wonder . . . you never by chance came across them?'

'I'm afraid not.'

'Did you get any news of them, Count?' Tomavich asked.

'They had heard at home. They are all in good health, I am thankful to say. Have you had any news?'

'None since you went. My wife is still in Belgrade, so far as I know.'

'Naturally there was little my people could say. The nazis never let me out of their sight. I understood, however, that my eldest boy had been trying to join an Austrian unit which is to fight beside the Allies. It has not been formed yet, but he will join it when it is formed.'

'An Austrian unit? Under whose command?'

'I understand there have been political difficulties.'

'Very likely,' Tomavich said. A pause followed. The friction was staying underneath. Alan repeated his story, as he had told it to the professor the second time. Count Eulenstein nodded approval for the escape.

'Excellent,' he said gravely. 'And where is the third?'

Alan didn't tell him why Brian had left them. When he came to the meeting with Ivan and Mischa, Count Eulenstein's hands moved and he leant forward.

'So they were going to Yugoslavia? Were they intending to pass through Vienna?'

'They didn't say.'

'If they do, they will find many friends there.' He turned to Tomavich. 'I gained the impression that your party has many adherents there. Their numbers appear to have increased considerably.'

'And yours?'

'And ours, I think, also. The collaboration at present appears satisfactory, from what little I could gather. Many of the priests are doing excellent work. And how is Father Stefan?'

'All right, as far as I know,' Tomavich said. 'He'll be glad to see you.'

'I shall have news of some of his friends. Is he allowed to celebrate the Mass yet?'

'No.'

Count Eulenstein frowned.

'It is too bad,' he said, sitting bolt upright. 'I had hoped that at least that concession might be made before Christmas. You knew they had turned my chapel into a hospital?'

'Was it full?'

'I am happy to say it was. Vienna is full of hospitals, and the hospitals are full of wounded nazis from the east. I was told they are also suffering from typhus and frost-bite. I should have thought they could find more suitable hospitals than places of worship. However, if all the churches in Austria can be filled with their casualties, the war will be over quicker. I should not even object to the Stefanskirche.'

'These pyjamas of yours are marvellous,' Tug said abruptly, passing his hand softly across the silk. 'It's almost like touching a woman.'

Eulenstein smiled. 'Alas, that was a pleasure the nazis would not permit me. The women in the streets are terrible now. Terrible. You know those German women with their blouses and their atrocious hats. And no make-up. And all in the most shocking uniforms. I went along the Ringstrasse and I did not recognize it. You must wear those pyjamas, young man, and then you will have sweet dreams and soft illusions. We shall share all these clothes, naturally. Do you know Vienna? Have you ever been to Austria?'

'No,' said Tug, comically. 'This is our first visit to these parts.'

'And after you met these two Russians?'

Tug went on with the story. Alan noticed a signet ring on

Count Eulenstein's finger. The frame was thick gold, set with a small cameo of an owl; the same crest was on his cuff-links. Eulenstein and Tomavich seemed to be on good terms and Eulenstein had spoken of collaboration between their parties; he wondered exactly what that meant, looking forward to Eulenstein's account of himself and glad when Tug made a quick end of their own. It struck him as tedious, although Eulenstein followed it closely; it was difficult to tell whether his attention was genuine or merely courteous. Tomavich watched him all the time. Both men had a rather dandified air. Their determination to keep up the appearance of civilization had made their behaviour stilted. They had weathered their sufferings so far, until their sufferings had become ingrained in them and they had grown acclimatized to their losses and troubles, like a man who has lost a limb. In order to hide their deepest feelings they had put on a disguise of normality; in the bleak cell, with the bars and latrine bucket and the sentry pacing outside, their ordinary habits had become like mannerisms.

Eulenstein asked the unavoidable question.

'When will your invasion start?'

People in Vienna spoke of nothing else, as far as he could learn from conversations aside. The nazis were belittling the danger, but he fancied that they were anxious.

'There were rumours of the Emperor being in London,' he said. 'Had you heard anything of that?'

Tomavich smiled broadly, and Alan did not understand whom Count Eulenstein meant; he could not answer even when 'the Emperor' was explained to him. The explanation was given in a tone of serious reverence, and he understood it to be a matter about which jokes could not be made.

'Stromers will be glad of your information,' Tomavich said. 'Will you give it me in the morning?'

'Stromers? Oh, yes. How is he? Have there been any new arrivals? Anything startling?'

'Nothing except these two.'

'And very pleasant company for two old men.'

'Old!' Tomavich exclaimed. 'We're not old yet.'

'Are we not? Sometimes I ask myself, Professor.'

Eulenstein sat at the table in silence, looking round the cell. The effusion of welcome had dried up. During the first hour he had reminded Alan of prisoners in the castle who came back to their messes after a week's solitary confinement. They were always refreshed, full of good-will, and set on defeating their surroundings; but only for a little while. Now the truth was getting its hold on him. He understood where he was and the annihilating prospect ahead of him.

Alan and Tug, too, said little that evening. The dreariness came in like a mist, and the sounds of traffic and belfries striking the hours and quarter-hours were a torment. How much worse it must be for these men, who could have escaped it all. The professor, so slightly built and thin under the blankets that his bunk appeared to be empty, had his wisdom to hold him up; no doubt he would be thinking now of Count Eulenstein, and from Count Eulenstein his thoughts would wander to that illustrious family, and so to the history of the Austrian Empire, backwards and forwards among the centuries, until at last he slept. Count Eulenstein lay still on the top bunk, with his carved face in the centre of a straw pillow and his hands folded outside the blankets, like a crusader on his tomb. To-day the crusades were not for him; all, whether the Germans won or lost, would be against him. He had hung a crucifix on the wall alongside, and there was a small cross round his neck. His lips moved as he repeated the rosary. He believed and trusted in God and the Roman Catholic Church; this, like the professor's wisdom, was his raft against events.

Alan was surprised next morning that the prisoners in the wash-house showed so little friendliness towards Count Eulenstein, considering his honourable behaviour in returning. Some of them even looked at him with resentment, eyeing his pyjamas and his shaving brush. Alan saw them whispering; jerking up their heads and sticking out their jaws, as he had seen soldiers do

when an unpopular officer went past. Eulenstein's high-mindedness meant less to them than the fact that he was a man of rank and wealth. Most of them were there out of loyalty to some idea, and his particular idea was not popular in the Josephine-strasse. Besides, he had been among the enemy; no one could tell what he might have said to them. As like as not, he had come back to spy.

Eulenstein must have known their suspicions, but he took no notice. He bowed across the basins, right and left, in an old-fashioned manner, and was usually answered, if at all, with a brief nod. Several people were laughing at him and shrugging their shoulders. A few came up and congratulated him. Renier looked enviously at the silk suit. After a little he approached, and looking round to see that the sentries had their backs turned, pointed at it suggestively and made an offer. Eulenstein shook his head. Major von Vrede entered. The two friends shook hands and at once began an animated whispering, pretending to be washing. They were kindred souls, happy to be together. Schleppner saw them and shouted out:

'Now then, none of that. You know the rules. Get on with it, both of you, or there'll be trouble. Shut up!'

He stood over the two monarchists, his head pushed forward, and looked round at the other prisoners for approval. He knew exactly what most of them thought about Eulenstein and Vrede.

'No aristocracy here, is there?' he said, grinning.

Nobody answered him. Stromers was talking openly to Tomavich but Schleppner made no effort to stop him.

'What did Renier offer you?' Tomavich asked, back in the cell.

'I'm afraid I didn't get that far.'

'It might be worth trying a little exchange. Material like that is very rare. The women outside would give anything for it. It's your affair.'

'It had occurred to me. I shall try something with Schleppner. In fact I brought some of it with that object.'

'It would be better to do it through Stromers. He does a good deal of trading with the sentries. He knows them all.'

'I'm sure he does. However, I think I can manage myself.'

'Schleppner will cheat you. You could get a much better price through Stromers.'

'Shall we wait and see?' said Eulenstein politely, closing the subject. He was proud and obstinate, determined to show that he could manipulate the Germans as well as anyone; he was used to getting what he wanted and knew the way to go about things. But when Schleppner came in Eulenstein bungled the deal completely. He had no commercial instinct, and his bargaining was ridiculous. Tomavich looked on and sighed. Schleppner held out for his first price, which was much too low, and Eulenstein failed to raise him any higher. A pair of the pyjamas went for hundreds of cigarettes too few. Schleppner stuffed them into his uniform; he would sell them outside for a small fortune.

'I don't want to discourage you,' Tomavich said, 'but Stromers could have got three times that price.'

'Nonsense. I was quite satisfied.'

And when Schleppner returned with the cigarettes, Count Eulenstein shared them equally round.

He had very neat habits and disliked having any of his belongings disarranged. Tug's disorderliness shocked him. He spent ten minutes brushing and combing his hair in front of a steel mirror. Alan admired the way he settled immediately into a routine; in those conditions such people were easy to live with, and he preferred to have a routine himself. When Count Eulenstein used the latrine bucket, Alan felt that they should all turn away, so that he should not feel degraded. Tomavich nudged Alan and said:

'It's like Louis Quatorze. He used to speak to his courtiers seated on the stool. I feel as if I were being received in audience.'

After Count Eulenstein had finished his toilet, the four of them sat round the table and he told them what had happened.

'After I left here, I was taken to Vienna by car. I do not know who my escort was, but certainly some nazi of importance. He sat with me in the back, while an armed guard followed. He behaved with calculated politeness, so that I soon realized they wanted to get something out of me. The journey was very

pleasant, as you can imagine, especially the first hot bath. We did not stop in any of the towns, but ate at inns off the road, where meals had been arranged for us. There was no barrier at the old frontier and I felt a pang as we crossed. I recognized many familiar places, and when we passed the turning which leads towards Eulenstein I almost asked the chauffeur what he was doing. My escort was evidently well informed about me, for he reminded me himself that we were not a dozen miles from my home.

'They did not allow me to live in Vienna. I was lodged in a villa on the southern side, in the direction of Wiener Neustadt, which once belonged to a well-known Jewish lawyer. I had often been invited to his musical parties, which were quite famous in the old days, but had never accepted. My wife had visited there and the villa lived up to her description. He must have been a man of taste. He is dead now, and it seemed that this nazi had taken the villa over. They made me very comfortable. The guards, who did not wear uniform, were not obtrusive, though they always followed me. The food and wine were really excellent. I took advantage of them. Why not? It was not likely to last for long. I wish I could have brought some back, Professor!'

'I wish you could.'

'I even had a telephone in my bedroom. It was the most extraordinary feeling. I had not used one for five years. I was tempted to get in touch at once with all my friends remaining in the country. Of course it was out of the question; they would have been compromised, and some indiscreet remark might have escaped them.'

'Various important nazis came to call on me, all of whom treated me with painstaking courtesy. I was taken to see the so-called Gauleiter, and hints were dropped of a visit to Berchtesgaden, which I should not have cared to undertake. Talking of visits to Berchtesgaden, I heard that Schuschnigg was alive. You know there were rumours of his death. I was glad to learn that he is keeping in good health.'

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'Yes,' said the professor, without interest. They were all names to Alan: Schuschnigg, Berchtesgaden, people and places that had made a stir in the London papers, and then you turned over to look at the sporting news and the cartoon.

'What was the point of it all?' Tomavich asked. 'What were they all getting at?'

'It was the usual story. One you and I know very well. They all had the same thing to say to me. Some said it casually, some made an elaborate theme of it. They wanted to know if I understood that nazi Germany was defending Europe against bolshevism and the Jews. Did I understand that if the nazis lost — they almost said, when the nazis lost — all Austria would be overrun, law and order would be overthrown, and I should forfeit my life and my estates in a revolution?'

'Ah . . . a-a-a . . . h!' long drawn out, said the Professor, nodding his head slowly. 'So it was that.'

'Yes. The theme of all our arguments, Professor.'

'The theme of all our arguments. And the nazis took your side.'

'I did not argue with them. My mind was made up.'

'No, I did not expect you would,' Tomavich answered gravely. 'You listened to them, though?'

'Oh, I listened to them. It prolonged the holiday. They were able to present me with Austrian citizens who were collaborating. Their big gun was a man calling himself the Bishop of somewhere. The properly appointed Bishop had been displaced and this villain had come from heaven knows where. I understood him to be a personal friend of Hitler. It was apparently his task to reconcile the teaching of the Church with the teaching of the nazis. I brought the interview to an end. It gave me a nausea to think of the evil which such men are injecting into our youth. I would rather the country turn Lutheran. Naturally, he made good use of the contention that the Soviet Government is an enemy of the faith and that by ranging myself against the nazis I was ranged against religion. It was difficult to keep my temper. I cannot understand how such an appointment was ever tolerated. He was the most unpleasant, oily, hypocritical villain.'

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Count Eulenstein was really a very handsome man. He sat erect, with his ramrod back away from the back of the chair, and the fur collar open to show his clean white shirt. He spoke better English than Tomavich. These two between them made Alan feel extremely provincial, almost parochial.

'My most disagreeable interview was with Prince Ferschenberg,' Eulenstein said. 'Prince Ferschenberg's attitude during the occupation has not been at all correct, and he will have much to answer for when the time comes. I had known him of course in the old days. He was a man of charm and talent and, although he made no pretence of his nazi sympathies, none of us ever dreamt that he would go to the lengths of total collaboration. He seemed to me a weak man, who would probably leave Austria at the first chance. His wife must have been the deciding influence. She was an Italian, a woman of ambition and natural power, very handsome, and a close friend of Mussolini's.'

'Ferschenberg?' repeated the professor.

'Stanislaus Ferschenberg. He is the head of the family.'

'A long time ago I had some correspondence with him. wanted to consult his archives for a paper I was preparing.'

'I doubt if either Prince Ferschenberg or his archives will be accessible at the end of the war. I think of him with disgust. He had the impertinence to offer me a post as a kind of assistant to the Gauleiter. He called on me at this villa, where we had a stormy conversation. He was even wearing the Hitler badge in his buttonhole. To think that that man had eaten my salt and been my guest in the country! I was ashamed of him.'

Count Eulenstein spoke with incredulous indignation, expecting them to share it. He ceased to be impassive. Tongues of fire licked at his eyes and his eyebrows contracted.

'Prince Ferschenberg wished me to assist him in interpreting national socialism to our people. That apparently was the purpose of my release. They were using him as their intermediary. He said that Hitler was anxious to encourage Austrian culture . . . encourage! . . . encourage our culture! when our ancient religion has been insulted, our traditions defaced, and all that made our

country dignified and individual assailed! I rebuked him most strongly. I called him a traitor. He appealed to our friendship, which had never been close. He appealed to me as one of the hereditary leaders of our people. The proper place for such leaders at such a time as this is either in exile, organizing an army with Prince Starhemberg, or in this prison, and I told him so. I fancy he was uneasy. The future is not far off.'

'Do the nazis seem worried? About the war, I mean?' Alan asked.

'They avoided conversation about it. Naturally, I asked several times why they were so anxious about Russia, when the Russian armies are so far distant from our frontiers . . .'

'There are armies within the frontiers,' Tomavich said.

'Yes, I gained that impression,' Count Eulenstein replied, thoughtfully. 'There is great discontent in Vienna, and wherever there is discontent extreme opinions are likely to exercise a hold upon the people. Where religious feeling is strong a balance will tend to be preserved. All the churches are full. The number of communists has greatly increased. I fancy the nazis have been hoping to mitigate the influence of communism by discreet encouragement of the Church . . .'

'And so they sent for you, Count Eulenstein?'

'I don't flatter myself they credited me with so much authority. However, it is possible that my name would carry weight. They are rather short of names themselves, and the past, as you know, Professor, still has a certain glamour for the people.'

'Do you know what Gustav Freytag said?'

'Gustav Freytag? I know many things he said.'

'One in particular comes to my mind. "German history," he wrote, "shows that we have always demanded a long series of popular and fascinating figures to stir the souls of the people. The Germans always sought to supply the lack of heroes; and even the eagerness with which they exalted a clear-toned orator, or even an influential and imposing Austrian nobleman, was a sign of the existence of an unsatisfied longing." You are imposing, Count Eulenstein. You could have been influential. You would have made an excellent figure-head for them.'

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Eulenstein shrugged his shoulders, but he was clearly pleased. 'I take it they did not forget to mention the Jews?'

'They did not forget. They reminded me that Britain, America and Russia were all ruled by Jews.'

'Did they know your own feelings about them?'

For a moment Eulenstein was at a loss. 'I have no feelings about the race of Jews,' he said diplomatically. 'I do not generalize. Individual Jews have done harm. On the other hand, I have known many Jews of taste and understanding.'

'The Catholic Church in Austria has never been very friendly towards them, Count.'

'In the past. In the past. But the Church has never persecuted them as the nazis have done. The Church does not persecute.'

Tomavich raised his eyebrows.

'There is very little more I can tell you,' said Count Eulenstein. 'They took me to some of my old haunts. Evidently they had studied my habits very closely. I must have been spied upon for weeks when I was at liberty. I was allowed to eat at the *Drei Husaren*. They had even gone to the trouble of procuring me my usual table. I was treated exactly as if I were a free man. I tried to forget they were there. Imagine being back in your home, walking along the streets you used to walk along, having your hat and coat taken by the same girl, noticing the names over the hotels and restaurants. It gave me a great longing. But I could never get rid of that nazi smell. They were everywhere. Vulgar ugly men, with vulgar scrubbed wives, in their hideous dung uniform, polluting our city. We shall need to use a thorough disinfectant. The place reeks of their vulgarity. Filthy little upstarts, strutting in and out of the Bristol, and in the Ringstrasse, and at Sacher's. Why, even with that bucket, the air is cleaner here.'

'And they took you to your home?'

'It is a public building at present and the swastika flies over it. I should have been allowed to establish an office there and to live there. Prince Ferschenberg is still living at home. The pictures and most of the furniture had been taken out and only the most

worthless stuff left in.' He laughed dryly. 'I was told they had been put away for safe custody. I imagine my pictures are better lodged than we are. Perhaps Reichsmarschall Goering' — he put a note of fierce sarcasm on to the *Reichs* — 'perhaps Reichsmarschall Goering is looking at them now. He is reputed to be a man of culture.'

'And the chapel is a hospital?'

'Not only the chapel. All one wing is full of beds. The doctors were eating in my library.'

'What has happened to the Cranach?'

'The altar-piece? Gone. I have no idea where. It will be nice loot for somebody. The offers I have had for that painting from America! Fortunately my old major-domo was still there. He had thought it his duty to remain behind and look after things as best he could. He had kept my clothes and it was he who gave me news of my family in England. You have seen the house, Professor. You will remember the ballroom with the silver mirrors. The ballroom,' he said with impressive resignation, 'is full of typists. They wear white blouses with the nazi armbands.'

Count Eulenstein spent the afternoon with Tomavich, talking in a low voice in German. He was handing over the secret information he had been able to collect about the communist and socialist organization and the relations of the nazi government with the people. The air became charged with conspiracy. All this information would be passed to Stromers. Alan wondered if he had any means of handing it on. Although they were isolated, although they had no wires that he knew of reaching outside into the city, he had a sensation of being in a telephone exchange. Somehow the news would percolate. Minute items would arrive back at some headquarters and another pebble in the vast underground mosaic would be placed; one day, in a year perhaps, or less than a year, the surface would be ploughed up and they would see it there in the open, the foundation of new conflicts and new buildings.

'What do you think?' Tug said. 'Would you have come back?'

'I wouldn't trust myself. I suppose I would,' Alan said.

'I'd have tried to find myself some excuse for staying outside. Christ! Fancy getting outside, and having the offer . . . I suppose I'd have done the same.'

'In fact you would.'

Alan was less surprised at Count Eulenstein's return than at the cause which made him return. He was in so close sympathy with the nazis about the bogies and fears which the nazis had conjured up for him. Tomavich's opposition was uncompromising and irreconcilable. For what was Count Eulenstein suffering? For Austria, or for the Roman Catholic Church, or for his own conscience? and if it was for his own conscience, what way would it steer him when the war at last ended? He had lost the past, and renounced the present, and he could not be sure of a place in the future.

Alan saw Tomavich passing the information to Stromers in the wash-house and in the yard during the next few days. Count Eulenstein had long whisperings with Father Stefan and Major von Vrede, who seemed to be anxious and upset. Inside the cell Tomavich and Eulenstein remained on good terms. They talked about anything except politics, because it was the subject that interested and concerned them most. They suppressed it for the sake of peace. Occasionally, when one of them was asleep, the other would take Alan or Tug aside. 'You see, the nazis are clever,' Tomavich said, 'they tried every trick in the pack. They must have observed him for a long time. Anti-semitism was a strong card. He detests Jews. Notice the way he avoids Renier. Austrian Catholics have an old tradition of anti-semitism. It is often the same with great families. They borrow money from Jews, they invite Jews to play at their musical parties, but they are quite ready to connive at a little persecution.'

'What'll happen to him after the war?' Tug asked.

The professor looked at the carved statue, stretched out on the top bunk, with the threadbare blankets rising and falling gently over his chest, and replied, lowering his voice:

'It will depend on him, you see. I have tried to explain to him that the Empire is dead. A point comes beyond which we have

no meeting-place. With Hans Stromers and him that point is reached almost at the beginning. It rests with Eulenstein himself, but he is growing old, he has great estates, and above all he is vain. It is a pity that such nobility should be marred by vanity. No, I fear that the best he can hope for is a safe-conduct to the frontier; and then no doubt, England for a little, or perhaps America, or your Dominions. He has sons. They would do well to look for another future in those great prairies for which Tug has such a longing, and perhaps, after a generation or two, and some rough marriages, those stylized features will come to life again.'

Count Eulenstein, putting on an offhand tone, asked questions about England. He was probing them. He hoped that England, where men like himself were not yet dispossessed, would check and canalize the Russian revolution. He kept his real opinions about Russia in a strait waistcoat, now and then unbuttoning a button, and he seldom began without saying, 'Do not think that I belittle the achievements of the Russian Army . . .' Alan answered him briefly. Both he and Tug were very vague about politics in Great Britain. They felt their ignorance acutely. Tug warmed to Count Eulenstein. He was always a man for the minority. Had most of the prisoners in the Josephine-strasse been monarchists instead of communists, he would have been more friendly to Tomavich, to whom he had never listened as he now listened to Count Eulenstein. He sat alongside, sprawling forward with his elbow across the table, his head on his hand, while the fingers pushed their way through his thick brown hair.

Count Eulenstein was a devout admirer of Winston Churchill, whom he knew personally. He believed that Churchill would soften the impact of communism on Europe.

'Churchill is a very great man,' he said.

Tomavich shook his head.

'You don't agree, Professor?'

'I should first like some definition of this word, greatness. Its meaning has evaporated.'

'Surely you would not deny it to Churchill?'

'I shall wait until the peace treaties have been signed. He is a man of astonishing and powerful versatility. He has enough energy for a whole nation, so it appears. He is widely read, highly civilized, and he can grasp the world in his fist. But greatness is a great attribute, and only for a very few who take the limelight. I shall wait to see. Besides, I am out of date, and I do not know his attitude precisely.'

'Hasn't he done enough already?' Tug said indignantly.

'He is equal to the present moment,' replied the professor cautiously, 'and that is saying a very great deal. It remains to be seen whether he is equal to the present and the future as well. For a man of his age and his traditions, that would certainly be greatness.'

'I suppose he ought to be a communist,' said Eulenstein, smiling.

'You may put it in that way, if you please. I shall certainly expect him to show an understanding of communism.'

Count Eulenstein was laughing now. 'Has the professor been busy on you?' he said to Alan.

'We've heard his opinions.'

'Only a few of them,' said Tomavich. 'Already I have bored Tug, and yet I have not started to be exact.'

'It is your role to unsettle the youth,' said Eulenstein.

'Socrates was accused of that. Yet his reputation stands high with posterity.'

'I envy you your learning. You know how to digest it, so that it does not cause you troubled nights. It may have a disturbing effect on others who are less accustomed. You don't always consider the disquiet your advanced ideas may cause to the less talented.'

'It is always so,' said Tomavich, looking at Alan. 'No birth is without a pang. My ideas are not new, but their birth is painful in individuals as in the world. Once they have been born, their flow becomes easy and simple, like breathing.'

'I question whether the misery they bring with them is worth the outcome. Wars and revolution for the world, and distress

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for individuals. You are undertaking a great responsibility when you begin to preach them.'

'I am aware of it, Count Eulenstein, and I cannot do otherwise. The distress is temporary, limited in extent of time and space, but the outcome is a wider happiness.'

'So you have often maintained. As you know, I do not agree with you.'

There was to be a battle. Alan and Tug were like seconds, just about to leave the ring and take their place among the spectators. The professor sat forward on his bunk his eyes intent and shining. The fires in his little body were stoked and his gimlet intellect ready to work off them. He seemed to challenge Count Eulenstein; come on, I can beat you at this any day. But Eulenstein was also on the offensive, though his attitude had more repose. He sat at the table, his hand with the signet ring spread out, watching Tomavich carefully. Tug and Alan sat between them, and the guard thumped along the corridor outside.

VI

'Yes, Professor,' Count Eulenstein said good-humouredly, 'you throw your stone into calm waters and you start a whirlpool. It might be better to leave them calm and let less violent breezes ruffle them.'

'When the water has become stagnant, and scum has accumulated, the soft breezes will make no difference. The water must be drained and changed.'

'Do you think, for example, that religion has become stagnant? I assure you that in my part of the world it is not so. Religion runs very strong in our people's veins. I have seen them and studied them all my life and I know what I am talking about. Now men like yourself, Professor, are coming to cut this artery and let out half their life. On my estates the people believed in God and trusted in God. They were humble and

contented and honourable; many of them are still the same. The Church was their mother . . .’

‘The Catholic Church?’ Alan said.

‘The Catholic Church is my Church. There are other bodies which claim to be the oracle of Christ, and in their countries they have their respective influences. I don’t doubt that people find in them the same guidance and comfort that we find in the universal Church,’ said Count Eulenstein politely. ‘In Austria the universal Church is sovereign, and I trust will remain so. The people went to Mass and performed their duties with reverence and as a pleasure. I am not thinking of the great celebrations in the cathedrals, which capture the imagination of disappointed women and foreign tourists, but of the services which have been held in the small towns and villages for generations and spring from the hearts of those who share in them.’

‘It is magic, Count Eulenstein,’ said Tomavich. ‘It does not differ essentially from the magic of the jungle and the witch-doctors. It is more magnificent, it appeals to a higher phase of the intellect, and it has endured. The endurance of your Church is the most astonishing survival of an institution in history. None the less it is magic.’

‘Magic with reason behind it. Magic which reason approves. Reason does not have to be austere and stripped, as perhaps you would like it. At present we have a movement in the world in favour of austerity, but it will pass, as it always has passed. People will desire the mystery and the pageantry again.’

‘The mystery and the pageantry are necessary,’ said the professor, ‘so that people may be blinded to the fact that there is no mystery. The truth is superbly obscured; in other churches less superbly, sometimes even austere obscured. But the truth is there to be seized, that people must take their destiny into their own hands instead of trusting in mystical beneficence and intervention. The people on your estates may at present be devout worshippers, but you yourself have said that they are humble. I suppose you mean that they are poor. You said they were contented. I wonder. Have you ever heard of peasants’ revolts?’

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'Times of famine cannot be avoided. In times of famine insurrection is natural. I understand them, and I should not be one of those who try to put them down by force. It is for the rulers to lighten the sufferings of the people at such moments by sensible provision.'

'The people everywhere have always been in a state of famine,' said Tomavich. 'At intervals they are without food of any kind. At all times they have been starved of a full life. You say that they have been contented, but it has been contentment under compulsion, whether on your estates, or in the cities, in Austria, or Serbia, or even in rich and powerful Great Britain. They have never had the entry into a state of free contentment.'

'You should come to my home afterwards, Professor. You have not witnessed this life and I don't think that you can understand it.'

'On the contrary, I have witnessed it. I have seen it in my own country, and though I have never lived as a peasant nor as a landlord, I have formed my impression of it. It is not the same as your impression. When we were in the mountains, we slept often in the villages, and sometimes in the open, under the pine-trees. I saw the mud huts in which my people lived, hovels, places for animals, alongside a plot of land which barely supported them. These were their homes, squalid and unhealthy. A whole family existed in one room, and when it rained the water came through the roof and through the floor. Yet I suppose you would say that these families were contented. In Belgrade and in your own Vienna I saw the poverty of the towns. I didn't come to Vienna only to visit the Eulenstein palace, with the Cranach on the altar, or the university, or the Albertina museum and picture galleries. I also saw the crowded streets where half the citizens live, and the Karl Marx dwelling-houses which an enlightened government built to take the place of those crowded streets. . . .'

'An eyesore!' said Count Eulenstein.

'Not, perhaps, very gorgeous, but better and more commodious than what had been there before. Did you ever see that

part of Vienna? Did you ever consider what your villages really were? I used to lie awake in the mountains, looking at those huts, and think to myself, this is what was happening while I lectured on Plato and Aristotle in the university and while you, no doubt, hunted the chamois and attended glittering receptions. I thought to myself, my learning will all have been to no purpose unless it can serve to turn those huts into homes. Your rank and wealth will have been to no purpose if they are not put at the free disposal of men who are without them. I have not been fighting merely for my learning. Have you been fighting merely for your rank?

Count Eulenstein was going to interrupt, but Tomavich went on: 'I have been restless myself. You know that. Long ago, when we first met in this cell, I told you of the doubts through which I passed. . . .'

'And now you want to make others restless. It is your way of avenging yourself, professor,' Eulenstein said agreeably. 'You think that everyone should go through a mill because you have gone through it. Why should they? It is your personal affair.'

'I think not. It is the affair of all of us.'

Gradually Count Eulenstein was losing the initiative. He shifted to his original ground.

'We have been digressing,' he said. 'I challenged your right and your wisdom in undermining the religious beliefs of my people, since that is one of the things your communism sets out to do. . . .'

'Not the beliefs. The institutions.'

'The institutions are the beliefs. What would have become of Christianity without the Church, and — I am willing to admit — the other churches that have branched away from it? It would have disappeared. The world would have been an anarchy.'

'What is it now?'

'An anarchy, engendered by false and mischievous ideas which have played upon the susceptibilities of the masses and brought them far more misery than well-being.'

'Do you really think that true of Russia, Count?'

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'We can leave Russia aside. Neither of us has been there. But I have noticed certain incontestable results in my own country, with my own eyes. You come to people who had faith and you take it away from them. You strip the anchor and rudder off the ship and you expect it to ride at ease. Millions believed in God. Now they are to be told that there is no God, and from then on they are wanderers, threadbare and barefoot in spirit, looking for a lost home. I have seen cheerful families and happy individuals completely disoriented and torn to pieces by these new ideas, becoming moody, resentful and dissatisfied. Before, their life may have been hard; but it seemed to have some purpose and to be watched over. After they have rejected the old communion, in order to receive your great new elixir, they learn that life has no purpose, is not watched over, and is not even much less hard than it was before.'

'They have their freedom,' said the professor. 'They are able to watch over it themselves. They can give it whatever purpose they choose. There is an infinity of purpose.'

'What purpose can man devise greater than humility before the unknown purpose of God? You have narrowed all their horizons. You have given them a life that ends in death and is meaningless.'

'There is no reason why they should not continue to believe in God, if they choose. Only, this belief should not be permitted to enforce on them a penurious existence in this world. They can have both worlds if they want both. But this world comes first, and in all the past this world has been denied them. Now let them inherit it.'

'They had — some of them still have — simplicity, as well as ignorance and poverty. They were capable of a kind of revelation from which I have learnt much myself. Now people like you, Professor, and Stromers and who knows how many hundreds of thousands more, are going to them with complications, unsettling and embittering them, robbing them of their peace.'

'Those who have learning must make use of it. Those who have discerned what life could really be should indicate the route

to others. The rich and the comfortably provided-for become conscience-stricken, and they join with the poor whose conscience is simply their need, in order to end the injustice of unequally balanced societies. The rich harbour among their own numbers the men who will overthrow them; a minority, but a fervent minority. You should be one of them.'

'I am not indifferent to injustice,' said Count Eulenstein. 'I did my best to administer my estates fairly and to see that no one was exploited or unduly favoured. . . .'

'Yet the whole estate was a living example of exploitation. Benign no doubt, and possibly efficient, but exploitation none the less. You had a palace and a castle — several castles, I believe — and they had huts. You worked as you chose, at leisure, and they worked in order to stay alive. If they had stopped working, they would have died. Even those who were not constantly under the shadow of starvation, those whom you would call well off, had no conception of the life available to you; of travel, ease, music, entertainment, and freedom from all material anxiety. They were not half-way, not a quarter of the way to life.'

'Really, that is rather absurd. What do you suppose my farmers, and the workers in the towns, wanted with such things? They had no appreciation of them. They were contented, as I told you, where they were, until agitators came along to set them by the ears.'

'The agitators are the lovers of liberty. They could have no success unless people wanted to listen to them, and people who were contented would not want to listen. Many of the agitators are bitter, certainly, and some are self-seeking; but the best show what is meant by fullness of life, and indicate the method of action to procure it.'

'Fullness of life! What do you mean by it? A full life is a rounded life, not a life with the ends frayed and gaps left in order to look at vague inaccessible horizons. Many very poor people lead lives as full as the very rich, fuller indeed. The people I am thinking of had their work and their holidays, and all was contained within the circle of their religion. Now that circle is

being broken. It is not the size of the circle that matters, my dear professor, but the roundness.

'The society in which I chiefly lived, and to which I hope one day to return, was a rounded society. I am speaking now of the countryside. The cities present a more difficult problem. In the countryside it was agreed that I was the landlord and had wide responsibilities, which I tried to discharge. I administered, whilst others worked the land. I had some of the results of this labour, and they had the assurance of fair treatment. I knew them personally, as my family had known their families for generations. Mutual respect existed and, I believe, happiness; certainly there was peace and order. I should like you to have spent a little time there. I should like you to have seen the faces of my old servants when they saw me the other day, or to have felt the pleasure I experienced myself on seeing them. You should have been present six years ago at Eulenstein, when my wife and I celebrated our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. I shall never forget that day. We had bonfires in the court-yards and on the hill-tops, and there was as much food and drink as anyone could wish. All the tenants came. Their rents were remitted for a week, and they brought us presents. They stayed until after midnight, singing and dancing and making torchlight processions, all in their best embroidered clothes. It was beautiful. At midnight there were fireworks beside the lake. The coloured stars fell into the water, and the explosions echoed all round the mountains, each echo starting another echo, many times repeated and each time growing fainter and fainter.'

Count Eulenstein's face became almost animated, and his voice was boyish as he described the scene.

'I remember listening to those echoes,' he said sadly. 'They sounded like guns. Neighbours said afterwards that when they heard them they thought the nazis were already invading. I remember thinking, how long will this happiness last? And next year it was all over. The premonition had been correct. The society was dispersed and men who understood nothing, nothing, had taken over.'

'And now there are more guns, different guns, beginning to echo a long way away,' said the professor. 'The armies of Russia instead of the armies of Hitler, and by those, too, you imagine yourself to be threatened, do you not?'

'I don't know what will happen. I only say that you are wrong to censure the fabric of that society. You do it out of ignorance, I believe, not malice.'

'No, I do it from reason, not malice,' said the professor. 'I don't doubt that your people were attached to you. I have a respect for you myself. I have known the same kind of attachment myself in my lecture-rooms. My pupils used to come to me in the old days and thank me for the learning I had passed on to them, and I in turn was attached to them. Very strong attachment can flourish on a false basis.'

Alan smiled to himself. He saw the vanity of these two men emerging. It could not be missed. They were both so proud of the influence they had had on others; secretly they loved to be admired and looked at, the professor for his learning, Count Eulenstein for his breeding. The difference was that the professor knew his weakness. Alan doubted if Count Eulenstein knew his.

'I became dissatisfied with that admiration,' said Tomavich. 'The admiration itself was dwindling. My pupils wanted to know the new things, as I believe your tenants wanted to know them, had you kept your eyes open and had they been given the chance to learn. So I left, and when I return I hope I shall be less vain. And you left, and it seems to me that you wish to return unchanged to the old relationship.'

'No. I understand you,' said Count Eulenstein. 'I too have learnt. I see that there must be alterations and improvements. In the cities, especially, everything must be much better. I know of the poverty in Vienna. You are wrong in thinking that I was blind to it. Many of my friends were blind, fools like Prince Ferschenberg, pursuing only their own pleasures. My wife and I had long done what we could in the poorer quarters, taking presents, organizing relief. We considered it our duty. It was the least that we could do, as Christians.'

'Yes, the least,' Tomavich murmured, so low that Eulenstein did not hear him. Alan suddenly had a picture of Count and Countess Eulenstein. He did not suppose it to be accurate. It jostled with memories of some film he had once seen. He imagined them in winter in a sleigh, driving through a warren of steep and huddled back-streets, where women in tattered clothes came to the doors to look at them. Countess Eulenstein was dark and very pretty. She wore pearls in her ears and a fur hat a little sideways on her head; her hands were hidden in a fur muff. Her husband sat beside her in a long coat reaching to his ankles. The sleigh was drawn by two fine ponies with silver bells and stacked with parcels. The bells jingled and the skis of the sleigh crunched the snow.

'But that was not enough,' Count Eulenstein went on. 'The attitude of the business men has been at fault. The disgraceful state of the cities is due to the callousness of employers. They must change, or indeed there will be a revolution. They do not treat their workmen as human beings. They have no personal interest in them, regarding them merely as part of a machine to make their personal fortunes. I have noticed it over and over again, and my sympathies are entirely on the side of the work-people. I should like to extend to business and commerce the same ordered and contented relations which exist between my tenants and myself. There is no call for a class struggle. It is a question of greater sympathy. After the war I shall use all my influence to infuse this sympathy into the present framework of industry. The factories should be like manors. I should favour the most severe penalties against business men who continue to behave without regard for their employees. . . .'

Alan looked at Tomavich, remembering what Tomavich had said of this idea a few days earlier, and Tomavich's distended right eye winked; a deliberate, calculated wink.

'The workpeople should be encouraged to feel that they are partners in the firm employing them, not slaves,' Count Eulenstein continued. 'They have a natural right to be treated as partners. It will give them a greater interest in their work, and

statistics I have studied show that output is greatly advantaged in this way. It is to the benefit of all.'

'No, you are not a diehard, Count,' said Tomavich. 'But you should let your imagination run to the inevitable conclusion of this idea. It is right that the workpeople should be encouraged to think themselves partners in the factories. But thoughts do not grow on nothing. My own experience of the country is that those countrymen are most contented who own their farms. The nazis have shown intelligence in their treatment of farmers, guaranteeing length of tenure and aiming to secure inheritance by the same family. Ownership stimulates attention and causes people to desire order. It follows that the factories should be owned by those who work in them. The enthusiasm and fellowship you aim at will not arrive, except in rare instances, without ownership. The form it should take and the powers which the workers should possess are open to dispute and to experiment. The principle is logical and clear.'

'I don't envisage anything so drastic,' said Count Eulenstein. 'It would cause too great a shock to the delicate texture of our society. It is not really practicable. It puts an end to private enterprise. It . . .'

'I am familiar with the objections. It is not enough, though, that factories should be owned, or that this or that should be owned. The people must govern themselves. They must own the State and be the State, as I have said to Alan. . . .'

'As you have said often to me. Once again I reply, that the people do not know how to rule, and do not want to rule, and would far rather be ruled by those who are accustomed to it from long experience and those exceptional men who are born, in any class, with a special aptitude for it. The people wish to be left alone. The few are prepared to govern. Let them govern and leave the people to their work and their amusements. What do they care about politics?'

'They must learn to care, Count. Politics is only one word for their attitude to one another. No man who professes Christianity or any noble ethical code can neglect politics and be honest. It

is not true to say that they cannot govern themselves. The present rulers of Russia have exposed that cliché. It may be true to say, at present, that many of them do not want to govern themselves. Well, events in Germany have shown to what abuses of their confidence their apathy will lead. Their leaders cannot be trusted, no more than landlords or business men can be trusted, to do what is in the interests of society, so long as society itself remains indifferent. The people need to concern themselves directly and actively with their own affairs; and they must have the power and ownership of their own affairs in order to feel this concern constantly and express it vigorously.'

'But if the rulers are honest . . .'

'The day you hope for is already past.'

'But if there is a change of heart among employers,' said Count Eulenstein obstinately, becoming annoyed, 'if society recovers its reverence for God and the duty of each one to his neighbour . . .'

'All that is possible, but equality must come first. You are preaching a modern form of the paternal state. You are dreaming of a world of enlightened landlords. . . .'

'They are honest.'

'Honest to a point. When their personal privilege becomes threatened, no one is less scrupulous. Enlightenment is limited by their special interests. It is so with you. You are not completely honest. I say it without intent to offend.'

'None of us is perfect, Professor. Even you may be open to criticism,' said Count Eulenstein tartly. Their carefully preserved tolerance was breaking down. They had plastered over their differences in order to live together, developing auxiliary sympathies of taste, reading, travel and so on; but the long months of prison and the hardships they had suffered had failed to merge their opposite causes. In the end they would still be enemies. Dr. Tomavich had a better hold on himself. He was easy to rouse, but difficult to annoy; his tolerance was that of wisdom. He had cut himself off from vulnerable privileges in return for independence; he lived on his intrinsic resources.

Count Eulenstein's tolerance was a kind of beatified courtesy, more attractive and at first sight more genuine; but its roots were not in his heart.

'You have fought the nazis,' said Dr. Tomavich. 'You are a brave man and once again you have refused to give in to them. Yet your opinions are closer to their opinions than they are to my opinions. You believe in an authoritarian State, in which the people are ruled from above by some supposedly benign custodian. For the nazis it is their party, and the spirit which gives the State a dynamic vigour is nationalism, leading to war. For you, I imagine, it is the Roman Catholic Church, and the spirit which permeates your dream society is a static Christianity, supporting you and your like in power and leading to stagnation. You were a friend to the Catholic dictatorship of Dollfuss and Schuschnigg, which fought the most violent battle against the people of Austria. Your Christian Socialism of the last century and the early part of this century is in direct line with the fascism of Hitler. Read the first chapters of *Mein Kampf* and you will find the link. From what organization did he get his passion for authority? From the Roman Church, and from the political party of the Catholic Church in Vienna. Who was the hero of his boyhood? Karl Lüger, the Catholic boss of Vienna. Read his own account of those early years, and see how the paternal and enlightened State, having grown stagnant, has been dynamized into the fascist State. Vienna, your Vienna, in the first years of the twentieth century, was one of the channels through which that reactionary current passed and Hitler was one of the receptacles. He discarded the religion of God and substituted the religion of the nation. You, Count Eulenstein, still adhere to the religion of God in order to preserve the society of inequality. . . .'

'And communism, Professor? What sort of religion is that? I suppose you are going to say it is an international religion. Roman Catholics have had an international religion for two thousand years, a spiritual, elevating religion, not a narrow fashionable materialism. . . .'

'Ah, that word!' exclaimed Tomavich, giving his first signs

of impatience. 'Materialism! I am materialistic, you are materialistic, the communists are materialists. What do people mean when they use that word? It is worse abused even than the word communism, or the word fascism.' He held up his hand in a very professorial gesture, the fingers splayed out and bent back from the wrist. 'Materialism has an exact meaning in philosophy and in science,' he said. 'I am not going to give it you, nor, alas, does it matter very much. Scientific definitions matter less, once people have become excited, than the meanings they personally intend to convey, and often those meanings are extremely vague. You, Count Eulenstein, would no doubt call a business man a materialist because his first occupation is to make money; while you, with your money made for you, can afford to be an idealist and to cultivate spiritual values. Small tradesmen, men of sober habits accustomed to dealing personally with their customers, call financiers and department stores materialistic, because their money-making is not softened by the human touch. Fascists use the term against communists for many reasons, on which I could compose a long paper. It is one of the most successful epithets that has been hurled against us and has won the fascists great numbers of adherents.'

By now Tomavich had completely forgotten about Count Eulenstein; as far as he was concerned, their argument was over for the moment and decided in his own favour. He was out of the forum now and back on the rostrum.

'What is intended by the word materialist when used as a term of abuse, what is resented, is — I think — the habit of scientific analysis applied to individuals. The analysis may be economic or biological, or both, as it should be to be thorough. It will seek to discover the extent to which a man's reason and emotions are influenced by his income and position in society, and the need to acquire and maintain an income. It will also seek to lay bare the complex of hidden forces, still very cursorily understood, which we call psychological, which belong to him personally, and have not been implanted in him by — although they will certainly be profoundly affected by — his economic

circumstances. Marx and Lenin are conventionally taken as pioneers of the first analysis, Freud, Adler and Jung and Lenin also as pioneers of the second. Their tentative ideas were seized, as new ideas are always seized, by hosts of half-educated admirers who injured them by exaggeration. It was the fashion at one time for communists to interpret all men's motives in terms of their class; there may be many who have not yet moved beyond this point. It was the fashion at one time to interpret all men's motives in terms of sexual repression or excitement; there may be some whose perception even now can probe no further.

'Fascists have gone to the opposite extreme. The use of analysis infuriated them, usually because they have been men either too slothful or too stupid or too wilful to practise it themselves. They said that it blasphemed the sanctity of the human will. They thought it meant there were to be no more individuals, and that all men were merely slices of environment, slabs of class, which happened to be endowed with differently coloured eyes and other divergences of detail. This conception annoyed them, as it would annoy anyone.

'Biological analysis has caused particular offence, though by now, I fancy, people are beginning to understand that it may make them and the world happier. They do not always like to dissect their emotions, which seem to them fine and pure like flames. They like their emotions to remain secret and inviolate. Communists and many others not communists, not afraid to take advantage of discoveries in this field, have made use of them and make use of them constantly to explain the sources of men's feelings and actions. This is rational. But if many of the fascist leaders had treated themselves scientifically, they would have found in themselves not the heroes and the rare spirits they thought they were; but a tangle of commonplace complexes and repressions which ought to have been treated in a home instead of allowed to guide a nation. Why did the nazis burn Freud's books and drive the old man into exile? Not merely because he was a Jew, but because his books were the mirrors of their own envenomed passions. Why did they destroy Magnus Hirsch-

feldt's institute of sexual research, painfully built up over many years in order to help men and women to understand themselves? They said that it was decadent, indecent; the truth was that it told them too much about themselves. But they did not want to know about themselves. They did not want to be cured, since to be cured implied a curb upon their passions; their wilful ignorance was their power, and they did not want to lose it.

'So, refusing all that science could have done for them, they rushed to the opposite pole and decreed that the human individual Will was all, paramount, and all environment and all the forces sweeping up to them from the past merely a heap of material for the will to work upon. *Triumph des Willens*, the nazi film is called. It is one of the favourite Teutonic thoughts. It appears, of course, in Schopenhauer and in Nietzsche, but I would not insult their memory by blaming them for the hideous twists which fascists have given to their ideas. The Germans have a very thorough practical way of carrying out extravagantly romantic ideas; they have used it on this idea of the Will. It has ended in the surrender of all the individual Wills to a single Will, the great man. Heroes! Man-Gods!! Siegfrieds!!! Hitlers!!!! It is so simple, believing in great men, like believing in fairies; they will do everything for you. Great men, say the nazis, copying your English Carlyle, who himself hero-worshipped Frederick II, swoop suddenly out of the blue, divinely inspired, and shape the course of events from some mystical Olympus.'

'Do you call Hitler a great man?' Alan asked.

'Certainly not.'

'Nor Churchill?' said Tug.

'Not yet.'

'Yourself, perhaps?' said Eulenstein slyly.

'Not myself.'

'Whom then?'

Tomavich put his fingers together and reflected.

'Those whom I admire,' he said, 'are the men who have learnt, either by suffering or analysis, their own character and the character of the circumstances in which they live; and by

circumstance I don't mean only their own society, their friends and the places where they usually move, but the whole of society, national and international. I admire them greatly if they can control the interplay between their own character and circumstances to the enrichment of both; strengthening themselves by battling with the problems of society, and improving society by developing their own best qualities.

'Those whom I do not admire are men who know neither society nor themselves; at present such men are in a great majority. It is easy to understand but difficult to admire men who know the world is in a bad way and decide to leave it there. Perhaps its confusion is too much for them, exhausted by their own work in the first place. Perhaps they begin a diagnosis, but when they discover that the cure calls for an operation on themselves they draw back. Perhaps they tell themselves that personal happiness is the most they can attempt and that, could everyone but acquire that inner serenity, then economic society would be far less important. Perhaps — but you know the variations; they are in the parable of the sower. A few go ahead, making themselves servants, looking for answers, explaining, enlarging their minds continually to save themselves from mere benevolence. I believe that Lenin and Stalin have been such men. The first victory is over yourself; then you can begin.

'Hitler is quite different. Catastrophes arrive in tempestuous periods, when men great in energy but weak in character lend to the force of circumstances the terrible force of their own spite and weakness and frustration. They are evil themselves, because they have not disciplined themselves, and what is evil makes use of them; what is good cannot, because the good is the unselfish, and they are selfish. Yes, you should read Hitler's own account of his early life, and see if you don't agree with me.

'The scene is Vienna, the year about 1908. Most of the violent movements which have torn men asunder in recent times are present there. An oppressed working-class is preparing for a socialist revolution. A resentful middle-class, sick of the rule of courts and cardinals and — forgive me — stupid aristocrats, are

anxious for a revolution which will not destroy the class society, but rejuvenate it. This movement is called Christian Socialism, and Karl Lüger is its head. The Hapsburg Empire is disintegrating under the shock of Magyar and Czech and the other nationalisms. Anti-semitism is rife; it is the chief cry of the Christian Socialist movement.

'Into this boiling crater comes the disappointed and ambitious artist, passionately convinced of his own superiority to other men. How carefully fate prepared his tragedy! He was born on the Austro-German frontier, so that he is a German nationalist. His father was an official, so that he looks down on the working-class. He is an artist and, feeling himself to be separate, he will not accept their discipline and is thrown out of his trade union. His drawings have a certain merit, but nobody will buy them, so that he considers himself to be misunderstood and grows bitter, certain that he was born for powerful achievements. Investigation will one day tell us where the anti-semitism came from; perhaps from contact with the Christian Socialists, perhaps from some private spite. Certainly there is some secret rage, due — I imagine — to sexual frustration or a disappointment in love, which exacerbates his hatred of mankind and the cynicism towards the masses which blazes so fiercely in the pages he writes about propaganda. In due time the tornado has accumulated and the circumstances are ready for the man, who emerges, to add to the fury of the age the fury of his own pent-up disappointment. All his phobias become magnified; events make them universal. His grudge against the Jews becomes the anti-semitism of all Europe. His contempt for the workpeople serves the fear of business men all over the Continent. His inferiority complex, and the desire for force which springs from it, extends and gratifies the inferiority complex of the German nation. Worst of all is the inflation of his vanity. It swells and swells, this sense of being greater than others, until he imagines that he can really turn events what way he wills, and proclaims, I am God or next to God, believe in my star; and millions surrender to him and believe in him.

'How frightful it has been! It is like a saga of Aeschylus. Sometimes my romantic imagination gets the better of me and I fancy that I do indeed see the hand of destiny, calculating, unerring, stretched out to change the points, uncouple the rails, and fling humanity headlong over the viaduct. Vanity, it is all man's vanity. To me Hitler is an unforgettable lesson of this weakness, a symbol of all those who will not search out their own vices and school themselves into a position of subordination to humanity. Clinging to their own frustration, savagely pitying themselves, they find suddenly that the accident of events has given them their chance, and round upon the world, under the guise of some idea, making their own chaos mankind's.

'You are vain, Count Eulenstein. Do you know that? Your castles and your palaces and the admiration of your loyal dependants have rendered you vain. Circumstances in the past have made it easy for you to indulge this vanity, and it is conceivable, though unlikely, that those circumstances will again be present after the war. Your enlightenment does not carry you to a point where you will be ready to surrender the privileges of your rank. But it is possible for you. Admit your vanity, and conquer it, and then you will not mind the loss of your great inheritance; surely these months can teach you that. You will be independent. You will be admired then for things more praiseworthy, such as your culture, your courage, your pride in yourself, and your sense of responsibility. You have always studied society in some detail. Study yourself, and clear yourself out of the way, to see more clearly.

'Hans Stromers is not vain, but he is capable of immense energy and power. You can see it in that squat head and crouching shoulders. His power may be his weakness. If he comes out of this prison alive he will be a man of importance in Austria, since many of the people know him and would be ready to follow him. But if he uses his power to avenge himself upon the innocent and finally to deceive those who have trusted in him, I shall disdain him as I now disdain Hitler.

'You, Tug, are impatient; you, Alan, are hesitating. I don't

suppose either of you will ever want to make a great show in the world, but your failure to overcome those defects may harm a few; and the fewer that each one of us harms by selfishness, the better. Besides, it is not enough not to harm people. The objective is actively to assist them. You asked me about great men. It is easier to speak in general terms than of individuals. I repeat, those I admire are men who have seized themselves of their circumstances, and of themselves, gaining by self-knowledge a strength and independence from which to start their mission to the world; not giving in to circumstances and not hoping to twist them to their private gratification. The Russians have absorbed a theory which floodlights the economic fabric of society. No nation has more relentlessly analysed and criticized itself. They have greatness, as I understand it, and they have power. May they use it, when the time comes, gently. Power to the gentle; that is what I am fighting for.'

'You've got a hope,' said Tug.

'Do you say that?' Tomavich asked reprovingly. 'You, an Englishman?'

'I thought you were talking about Russia.'

'I hope it of Russia. Of England I expect it. Will you disappoint us all again, as you did after the last war?'

Tug said nothing.

VII

IN the middle of December the snow began to fall each day. The yard was inches thick, and the snow clung to the prisoners' boots and melted on the stairs, in the corridors, and on the floors of their cells when they came in. All the same, because of the snow, the yard was warmer under foot. The square of sky was like a goose quilt, and the flakes whirled slowly against the high windows of the cells, sometimes falling inside.

Ten days before Christmas the Gestapo fetched Doctor Tomavich. They arrived at five o'clock in the morning. It was

cold and grey and for a moment Alan thought that he and Tug were going to be taken away. He sat up in his bunk and saw two men in black uniforms standing with Schleppner in the doorway. The door was open and he heard voices in the corridor outside.

Schleppner strode across to Tomavich's bunk.

'Come on, get up.'

He took Tomavich roughly by the shoulder and pulled him across the bunk. He seemed anxious to impress the two men in the doorway. Tomavich was only half awake. He was wearing an old shirt, and all his belongings, which were piled on him for the warmth, fell off on to the floor. He started to pick them up, still half awake and not understanding what was happening.

'Get up, do you hear?' shouted Schleppner. 'You're going.'

Tomavich was leaning over the bunk, picking up his clothes with one hand and rubbing his eyes with the other. Schleppner's words suddenly came through to him. He raised his head, one hand still dangling, the other held with the knuckles to his eyes, and saw the two men in the doorway. His eyes darted to the others and his lips moved without making a sound.

One of the Gestapo men barked something at him in a rapid staccato voice. The other three of them were awake now, and Eulenstein was leaning over Tomavich's bunk from the bunk above. Alan heard Tug moving underneath him. He guessed from the noises in the corridor that several of the prisoners were going.

'When am I to leave?' said Tomavich.

'At once.'

'I have had no warning. I have had no time . . .'

'Get dressed at once. You others help him.'

The professor stood in his shirt in the thin grey light. He seemed many years older and very wizened and ill. He gave Alan a desperate look. He began to fumble with his belongings, not knowing what he was touching. The other three got out of bed.

Tomavich said nothing while they helped him dress and put together a few of his clothes. Count Eulenstein said:

'Don't worry. They may be trying the same trick with you as with me.'

Tomavich did not answer. There was nothing they could say. Schleppner and the guards watched them grimly.

'Come on, hurry,' Schleppner kept repeating.

One of the guards stepped forward.

'You won't want that,' he said, pointing to one of Count Eulenstein's books, which they were putting in Tomavich's sack. He said something to the other guard and they laughed.

Tomavich stood in the centre of the cell, holding his sack with one hand. He wore a nondescript threadbare suit, half civilian, half military. He was bewildered with sleep and fear.

'Where is he going?' Tug said.

The two guards looked angrily at him.

'You'll find out,' said one of them.

'Where is he going?' Tug repeated.

'They won't tell you,' Eulenstein said.

Alan thought Tug was going to lose his temper.

'Where is he going?' he shouted again.

One of the guards stepped forward.

'Who are you?' he asked.

Schleppner told him something and he looked at Tug with insolence and hatred.

'You'll have to tell us where he's going,' repeated Tug.

The guard laughed.

'Come on,' he said, pulling Tomavich by the arm.

The professor moved forward in a daze, dragging his sack along the floor of the cell. The three of them watched him without moving. Collecting himself, Eulenstein took a step towards Tomavich to say good-bye to him, but already the guards in the black uniform had hold of him and were putting him out of the door. He looked back over his shoulder and tried to tell them something. A hoarse sound came from him, and his vibrating terrified eyes fell on Alan. It was the same look he had given them the first day they had come into the

cell, like a trapped animal. The door slammed and they heard shouts in the corridor.

Tug sprang to the door and began hammering on it and calling out.

'Don't do it,' said Eulenstein. 'It's no good. There's nothing you can do.'

Tug rounded on Eulenstein.

'Where is he going? Where are they taking him? They'll have to tell us. They can't take him away like that. . . .'

'It's no good,' said Eulenstein. 'It'll only make more trouble. There's nothing you can do.'

'He's right,' said Alan, afraid that they might come back, afraid what Tug might try.

They got back on to their bunks and sat there with their legs dangling, oblivious of the cold. Sleep was out of the question now.

'There must be a good many going,' said Eulenstein.

Alan asked, 'What do you think's happening?'

'Who can say? None of us is ever told.'

'Do you think they'll want him to collaborate?'

'It might be anything.'

'Do you think it's likely?'

'No,' said Eulenstein. 'We may know more this morning. Stromers may know something.' Eulenstein slipped off his bunk and picked up Tomavich's blankets. 'Here you are,' he said, giving one to each of them and taking one for himself. 'Better keep them.'

They lay back, pulling the blankets over them. Outside the city began to stir. They thought they heard lorries moving away. The streets were only a few yards outside. The prison was right in the middle of the city, not a quarter of a mile from the Rathaus and the Hofgarten, and in a few hours people leading an ordinary life, going to work and going to market, would be passing it. Eulenstein had turned his face towards his crucifix and Alan knew that he was praying. Alan also prayed. He did not know what words came to him or to whom he said

them, but he prayed that Tomavich might live, and in his heart he had a feeling that it was hopeless. If Tomavich could have lived, he would have given up all chance of leaving the Josephine-strasse himself, willingly, however long the war lasted.

When they went to wash later in the morning, they found that more than twenty prisoners had been removed. Father Stefan had gone and three lawyers and a Polish doctor. Stromers was still there, and to Eulenstein's relief, Vrede had not gone. They analysed the departures and came to the conclusion that the men had been selected by design and not at random. They were all like Tomavich, teachers, intelligentsia, educated men, and many of them had been in the Josephine-strasse for a long while. The three couldn't talk about it. Their helplessness and the certainty that the worst always happens swept over them. Tomavich knew what to expect. He had nobody to protect him. They could kill him at once, or slowly, enjoying it, and nobody would say a word. They might take their time, experimenting in the breaking of his spirit.

Late in the morning Eulenstein suddenly said:

'You mustn't forget him. When you go out you mustn't forget him.' Alan remembered this, because Eulenstein said it so suddenly, when they had not been talking, and because he said 'You' and not 'We'. He seemed to have had a premonition. He was unhappy, because Tomavich had been a friend. Soon Alan and Tug would go to the castle, and everything familiar would have left, and he would be alone. And then, one morning, he too would be fetched.

Snow was still falling when they went out for their walk. Drifts plopped down off the sloping roofs. Schulz stood in the centre as usual, slapping his leather thong against his jackboot, with Schleppner beside him. Schulz whistled, the guards took up their position, and the big door into the outer court-yard was barred.

Another whistle, and the prisoners moved off in file. Most of them wore some kind of overcoat, with scarves wound round their necks, and the caps or soft civilian hats in which they had

been arrested months or years ago. Count Eulenstein did up the fur collar of his jacket. Tug had not troubled to put on his rain-coat and wore no hat; the snow settled and melted in his hair.

As Alan walked round, shuffling behind the man in front of him and stamping his feet, he wondered which of them would ever go out into the free world alive. He thought there was a chance for Eulenstein. He did not know about Vrede; it was said he would not last it out. Alan wondered where Tomavich was at that moment. Already, to him and Father Stefan and the others who had gone, the Josephine-strasse would have become a place to be regretted. At least it was something they had known. They had grown accustomed to a routine there. They had become used to being forgotten; oblivion had seemed the best thing for them. To be remembered had been their dread.

Somehow or other, Hans Strömers would stay alive. One by one, he would get the guards under his control. He looked at them closely as he walked round, his squat head thrust forward, pushing out his lips. But even Stromers could not be certain. There was really no one there who had any grounds for hope, except Tug and himself, the Englishmen, the prisoners of war, the non-political.

Unexpectedly a commotion began. Renier had been walking out of line and Schleppner was shouting at him. Schulz strolled across, pressing his thin lips together and raising his eyebrows. Schleppner continued to shout, pointing at Renier. Renier protested and Schulz hit him across the shoulders with the thong. The Jew sank on his knees in the snow like a camel, covering his head with his arms, and the thong rose and fell. The file of prisoners stopped and men moved in a little from three sides, watching with impassive faces. Renier was whining in a cracked, high-pitched voice. Schulz stood square to him, beginning to enjoy himself, and the thong rose again. There was a movement among the prisoners, and Tug pushed through and hit Schulz on the jaw with his full strength.

Schulz went down and for an instant nothing seemed to happen. Alan thought his own reactions were slow. He remem-

bered moving forward. He remembered shaking off Eulenstein's hand, which was pulling at his sleeve, and he heard Eulenstein speaking. He had a curious sensation of being drawn on by something that he could not see. Schleppner's hand went to his belt, and Alan heard a shot, after which Tug seemed to break and collapsed into the snow. A guard came at Alan with his rifle brandished like a quarter-staff, and he felt a blow behind the ear that staggered him. That will break the skull, he thought. The prisoners eddied and scurried like leaves among the white slowly-falling snowflakes, and he heard shouts and whistles. His knees gave way, and he slid into the ice-cold drift; his head span and then seemed to fly away from him.

He was lying on a spring bed in a clean fresh room with other beds, empty, on either side of him. It was still daylight and snow was falling thicker than before. His head pounded, as if it imprisoned a large clock. He eased his fingers under the bandages and felt a long bruise behind the right ear, and a cut, on which the blood had congealed. Moving his head very slowly on the pillow, he saw a sentry standing at the door with a fixed bayonet. He tried to control his recollections, so that they would come back one by one and in order.

'Where is the other?' he asked.

The sentry looked away.

'Where is the other?'

'Weiss nicht.'

There had been a shot and Tug had collapsed into the snow. Perhaps he had been killed. That would be a fine thing. That would put an end to all their hopes of getting out. He had moved forward himself, trying to stop Tug, and then the sentry had hit him. He wondered how seriously he was hurt himself; it ached terribly, but it did not seem to be bad. He must find out about Tug first. Very carefully he began to get out of bed. They had taken off his boots and his raincoat had been thrown over a chair. The room must be an emergency ward for the Germans. He was surprised that they had brought him there. It was very

airy and after the cell almost friendly; it was the first time for more than three years that he had been on a spring bed.

The sentry called through the door and a German officer came in.

'Go back to bed, please,' he said not unpleasantly.

'I wish to see Lieutenant Wilson.'

'It will be arranged. The order now is that you stay here.'

Alan lay back on the pillow, his temples on fire and throbbing and a pulse thudding where the wound was. Well, now Tug and he had something to put up with like the others. He felt almost glad. What a fool Tug had been, though. Tug never thought. Anything might have happened, wholesale shooting, anything. Eulenstein had pulled at his arm. Eulenstein might have been roped into it, or Renier, or Tomavich, or any of them. No, not Tomavich. Tomavich had been taken away. That was what had got Tug. And then it had all happened because of Schulz and Renier whimpering and crying out as Schulz hit him. Renier, the black-marketing Jew they all despised. Eulenstein would not be pleased. He wanted to know what had happened afterwards. Above all, he must see Tug, at once.

Later the German officer came back and conducted him along a narrow passage in the German quarters of the prison. Two sentries followed. They reached a green door with a name painted on it. The room inside was somebody's office. It had a desk with a telephone and studded leather arm-chairs, and through the unbarred windows Alan saw the backyards of civilian houses, with the snowflakes falling into them and covering the tiles. Tug was lying on a couch, his face towards the door, with a blanket up to his neck. and Alan thought, what an extraordinary place to bring him. The face was pale and still, and he understood that Tug was dead. All the same, he remained in the doorway, saying to himself, No, I don't believe it. No. He went into the room and stood above Tug. He turned back the blanket with a feeling of curiosity. He seemed to be acting automatically, without will. Tug's shirt

was still soaked with the snow and with blood, which had gone black and clotted above a small wound in the chest. His identity disc was on its string round his neck. His body was cold and his big haphazard limbs composed.

The officer looked from Tug to Alan, and the sentry peered through the door. A hum of traffic swam into the quiet room and the snow fell steadily. Tug had an air of vexation, almost of anger, as if he had had time to regret what he had been doing. Alan thought that he looked at Tug for a long time. He did not know how long it was. He began to feel physically sick. He had seen people dead before, in the fighting, but he had never looked at them like this. It was not peaceful nor beautiful. It had a cold finality that made him feel sick and overwhelmed him. He turned round and went out. When he had gone out he wished that he had touched Tug, or taken some possession of his, or done something by which to remember him. He thought of him in there alone under the windows. There was something he should have done or said.

The days and nights that followed were the worst of all his captivity. He didn't go back to the cell. He wasn't treated badly. But dreams and conscience and his thudding wound joined against him and nearly threw him off his balance. Lately he had been ill fed, and he was in low health. An enormous wheel seemed to swing round inside his head. He thought of what he ought to have done and what he ought not to have done. He should have recognized Tug's mood and warned him. His reactions had been hopelessly slow. He should have guessed it after Tomavich had been taken away; he knew what Tug was, impetuous, always wanting to do something immediately. He should have seen it all coming the moment Tug stepped forward. He could have knocked up Schleppner's arm. He should himself have done what Tug had done. He had a nightmare about his guilt. Snow was falling and neutral insubstantial shadows, like the prisoners, were wafting and eddying round him, and an accusing clanging voice called out: 'Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake, the

same shall save it.' He saw hell fire and the devils. He woke up, shivering, like a child in terror of eternal punishment. He should have done what Tug had done. He should have stopped Tug. It was his fault . . . his fault. . . .

Dimly but with certitude, as though he were looking back at this period from some future time, he understood that he was at a crisis of his life. All the misfortunes that had come his way had been a challenge to him, which now he had to take up or reject. The sight of others' misfortunes dwarfed his own and made the personal challenge more insistent. He thought of Tomavich and how Tomavich could have escaped from his conscience and stayed somewhere in hiding until the war ended. He thought of Eulenstein, coming back to prison and the uncertainty, and of Anstruther, back in the castle, taking the easier way. He thought of Tug's folly. It was no good. It was the right action perhaps for a battlefield, but it was no good now. The times called for something more sustained, more exacting, than the heroic impulse of the moment. He tried to shun the conclusion which was being forced on him, that the service of justice and freedom are lifelong. All that was negative in him mustered for an onslaught upon him, sleeping or waking. He wanted to go back home as soon as the war ended, and stay there, leading his old life, under the hills. He longed for England. He wanted to get away for ever from the twisted Continent.

The conflict went on under his sleep. He remembered being told once that sick men can feel the germs fighting inside them; he could almost hear the struggle in his own mind. Dreams came which ended nowhere, beginning as sexual dreams and trailing away into a tormenting nothingness, so that he awoke frustrated and unhappy. Life appeared to him as a mockery. Voices told him that there was no point in any struggle. He dreamed that he saw a vast abyss, obscured by curling mists, and felt an immense crowd pressing him towards it. He dreamed of a desert without horizons, across which he wandered alone, meeting men and women with stone faces who could not speak to him. One night he saw Tug lying on the ground with a

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blanket over him, and a shadow as vast as a cloud rose over him, and Tomavich said, 'Russia, Russia. Huge and white. Huge and white.' In his worst nightmare of all he was struggling in an icy sea; wave after wave fell over him with frozen spray and he could not see land.

He tried to keep a part of himself detached, not submerged. His nerves were a mass of sensitive exposed points and it was hard to master them. Slight noises and sudden jolts startled him. He walked about the room slowly and deliberately, like an invalid crossing a busy street. With the part of himself that he kept aloof he was astonished at what had become of him. He saw how easy it was for people to lose their wits.

He clung to Tomavich's advice, that we must learn to understand and to direct ourselves. He guessed at the meaning of his dreams and of what was going on in him. On the night they had all escaped he had realized freedom. Now he seemed to have realized death. All existence, in an intensely concentrated period of a few months, seemed to be growing vivid to him, and death was a part of it. He had never been aware of it before, neither at home nor in the fighting. Tomavich and Tug had brought it home to him. It was a fact, and it was a mood, and he had to fight it. He had to go on.

It was death when he wanted to hide away in the hills at home and be there, remote and secure, for ever.

It was death when he thought of his mother and Jeanne and his retarded youth and wanted to go back to them.

It was death to blind himself to the distress and insufficiency in the world.

It was death to conceal himself from the messengers of his age, or in despair to seek any refuge without thought.

It was life to obey his own spirit, however chance and the surge for freedom inside him might evoke it, and however study might direct.

PART FOUR
THE CASTLE AGAIN

(Five months)

THE Germans at the Josephine-strasse suddenly became anxious to get rid of Alan as soon as possible. Tug's death seemed to have worried them. They could do as they pleased with Tomavich and the European political prisoners. Nobody had track of these men. But Tug had been a British officer, a prisoner of war, with a record and a number and an international organization to inquire about him; and after the war his case might be examined by a court of law and there might be punishments. So while Alan was waiting to be fetched back to Schloss Durheim, the Germans looked after his wound and treated him correctly. Perhaps they wanted him to take away a good impression of the Josephine-strasse. They were stupid enough to think this possible, and to them there was nothing reprehensible about it; it was a normal part of their administration. The rest of the time he was there he was not allowed to see the other prisoners, though he asked to have a talk with Eulenstein. He had an uneasy feeling that Tug had brought some kind of reprisal on them all.

At the beginning of the new year the Sneak arrived to escort him. The Sneak's wife lived in Munich and he had got a few days' extra leave through his influence with Lissow. As usual, he was all smirks and soft words, and evidently had special orders to treat Alan well. He was rather proud of being seen in public with a British officer under his charge. He put on an important air and explained to civilians who Alan was. Alan's head was still bandaged, and the Sneak said that this was a wound received on the Italian front; Alan didn't trouble to contradict him.

They went direct from Munich to Dresden, where they changed. While waiting on the platform Alan thought of his mother arriving there years ago to study music, tall and large, a little intense, hoping no doubt for a romantic young German lover. From Dresden they took a branch line and changed again

at the little junction of Feldkirchen, where the escapers had seen the convoy of tanks going to Italy.

It was Sunday, one of the Sundays on which civilians were permitted to travel, and the waiting-room was crowded. Peasants and soldiers sat round the walls on the hard benches, and the more well-to-do were at tables in the inner restaurant, drinking coffee and bowls of potato soup. Children ran in and out. The last waiter dashed sweating among the tables, while the manager, who had an official ribbon in his button-hole, bowed, rubbed his hands, and wished the customers *Mahlzeit*.

The prisoners had come across this scene many times, as they were shifted from one castle to another, from camp to camp. Alan and Tug had seen it while they were travelling south. It was much the same in any country in war. The people, quiet and tired, waited for an overdue train in which there would be no seats left. Some girls in white blouses flirted with a slick young lieutenant. The children laughed and chattered and asked questions, which their parents answered irritably. No one spoke about the war, except the Sneak, who was explaining grand strategy. But only an old country-woman, who had overflowed from the waiting-room, was listening. She wore a coarse black dress, with black beads, and a black woollen shawl round her head, and her head nodded all the time, up and down. In front of her were two glasses of dark beer.

There were a great number of official notices. The people were told not to discuss military movements, to remember the soldiers at the front, to travel only on certain days, not to grumble, and so on. Alan had the impression that they obeyed to the letter. An especially lurid notice depicted a German soldier on the eastern front. Under his steel helmet his black eyes blazed with fanatic intensity. His shirt was wrenched open, his young battered face dripped sweat and blood. 'Victory or Death' shouted a blood-red banner underneath. A Russian village smouldered in ruins in the background.

The Germans had become very troubled about the Russian front, though in public they said nothing about it. The Sneak

was explaining that everything was going to be all right. He was the only person in the room with a newspaper; and he illustrated his lecture from the news. The Russians, it was officially admitted, had just crossed the river Dniester. 'It was of no real importance to us, that line,' announced the Sneak. 'It would not have been worth holding merely for prestige. A waste of valuable lives. We must keep ourselves for what really matters.'

The Germans didn't argue with him; it was dangerous and unpatriotic. Alan didn't argue. The Sneak knew. If he said that black was white, it was no use arguing. He knew.

A train came in, puffing steam against the windows, and more travellers crowded into the restaurant. When all were settled, a German private suddenly appeared in the doorway, in full marching order, with a rifle, steel helmet, and cylindrical gas-mask. He wore a pack and was lugging a heavy kit-bag. Everyone stared at him. No one moved. His face was drawn and grey, the colour of road-dust. He had startled them, standing there in the doorway. He seemed to accuse. He looked like a ghost.

'Occupied?' he asked, pointing at a seat at the Sneak's table. His manner was apologetic. His real place was in the waiting-room outside, along with the others.

'No, sit down,' said the Sneak. He looked furtively at the soldier and spread out his copy of the newspaper. The soldier sat down, expressionless, like a clod, with large scabby hands resting on his knees, and said nothing. He glanced at Alan, took him in, and showed no more interest.

'I see you've evacuated Kirovograd,' Alan said, hoping to draw the soldier.

'It was of no real importance,' the Sneak replied.

'Why did you defend it such a long time, then?'

'The General Staff had their reasons. It will have given us a valuable breathing-space. We are reorganizing further back.'

'I see.'

The soldier's expression didn't change. Life seemed to have

been drained out of him. He ordered a drink and took out a worn purse. The spruce little manager came in and looked at him curiously, with a kind of embarrassment.

'Kirovograd is nothing,' went on the Sneak. 'Other things are more important.'

'Such as?' Alan asked.

'We shall see.'

The soldier's dull eyes sparkled.

'What's that about Kirovograd?' he asked.

'Do you know that part?' said the Sneak.

'I should. I've just come from there.'

The Sneak passed the paper across the table to him, and he read the communiqué carefully, his dry lips moving as he repeated the words to himself. He read it a second time and handed it back without comment or change of expression. Then he returned to his apathy, sitting with his hands on his knees. The Sneak continued:

'If we want Kirovograd back we shall take it back. At present there is no point. The High Command have their plans. It says so. The line is what matters, not high-sounding names. . . .'

Suddenly the soldier began to talk. His voice ran on, very fast and low, and he avoided their eyes. It was hard to hear what he was saying, but Alan grasped that it was something about the Russians.

'You should see them . . . thousands of them . . . wave after wave . . . I've seen . . . never know what's coming next . . . and the snow, and the cold . . .' It was an unburdening. It didn't matter if anyone heard him or not. 'The cold . . . you daren't go to sleep . . . always pursued . . . at night . . . never know what's coming . . . I can tell you. . . .'

It came from some far-off inaccessible state of mind. He was like a man in front of a doctor, wrenching some terrible personal experience from the depths of his soul. He was like a man returned from the grave. He couldn't look at them. He talked to the ground, to the table, anywhere but at them. They realized he was afraid; haunted. The Sneak leant forward and

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listened, hypnotized; this was the truth, then. The Hitler girls and the young lieutenant stopped giggling and looked at him uneasily. The old woman bent right forward, her gnarled head nodding.

'That's right,' she kept on muttering. 'That's right. That's what they told me.'

The voice went on, inarticulate, almost inaudible, and the soldier's fear filled the whole room. At last the Sneak remembered himself. The young officer was beginning to look restive. The Sneak touched the soldier on the arm.

'That's enough,' he said, and pointed to the notices.

The soldier dried up, as suddenly as he had begun. 'Ja' he said vaguely and sat as before, lifeless, his head sunk, his hands on his knees.

'He doesn't understand,' said the Sneak. 'He's very young. It's his first leave. He's not been there long.'

'How long does he get at home?'

'Ten days. Perhaps a fortnight.'

'And then he goes back?'

'Naturally. There are many who have been there all the time.'

Two glasses of beer appeared in front of the Sneak and Alan. The soldier had ordered them. The Sneak looked surprised, almost grudging.

'*Prosit*,' he said. The soldier nodded, without raising his head. The Sneak drank his beer slowly. He had already given Alan half a pint, and Alan noticed that he didn't offer anything to the soldier. Perhaps it was discipline. The soldier was a private and the Sneak was a sergeant-major in the Intelligence Branch, almost an officer; he had to think of his position and his prestige.

Their train came in, and they pushed their way on to the platform. The soldier got in last, dragging his kit-bag up the high steps. The train jogged towards Durheim. It was growing dark. The sky was heavy with snow. Alan looked through the window and saw a traditional Christmas landscape, white and

black, dotted with neat timbered farms. The soldier got out two stations before Durham. A plump girl ran excitedly along the little country station to welcome him, and Alan watched them meet. She stopped short and gave him a swift look of dismay. He was tall and bent down so that she could kiss him, but still without any change of expression, and at once her manner altered. She became very businesslike, picked up his pack, slung it across her shoulder, and shepherded him behind the crowd towards the exit. From a wall the poster soldier confronted them, heroic and undaunted, his eyes blazing, and the real soldier looked at the poster soldier. He stood beside the girl, not touching, strangers, and she gazed at him timidly, unable to reach him. He seemed not to understand what was going on. It didn't matter. Obey, fight, die, those were his functions. He was one of the victims.

The train jogged on. They were in the valley now. Alan saw the place where Brian had told them to leave their kit. He wondered if his battle-dress was still there and what had become of Brian. Over the fields he saw the little bridge they had run across, and there was a second's glimpse of the castle, before the houses of Durham hid it. As he got out of the train he heard a very English voice call out:

'Party! Party, 'shun!'

It was Corporal Fisher with a dozen of the soldiers from the castle. They were very smart, as if for a parade, with polished cap-badges and gaiter buckles. Fisher saluted him.

'Well, sir. Back again?'

'Back again.'

It made all the difference. Suddenly he felt cheerful, hearing the English voices and seeing the familiar, self-confident soldiers. McAllister was there, wearing a glengarry, and Fell, and others he recognized. They had come to unload Red Cross parcels off the train. Whenever they came into the village, they always made a show of it, polishing up and marching as if at home. Some of them had moved over to a group of Ukrainian girls who were working in the yard. They paid no attention to their

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German guard. One of the girls was standing very close to Fisher and Alan saw their hands touch.

'They'll be glad to see you up there,' said Fisher. 'All kinds of rumours there've been. Is it true Mr. Wilson was killed?'

'Yes.'

'Come on, please,' said the Sneak.

The soldiers took off their jackets and began to unload two uncoupled wagons, taking their time. The girls joined them. The guard tried to intervene.

'You keep quiet,' Fisher said. He might have owned the place. 'Cheerio, sir. They're all expecting you.'

Alan and the Sneak went out of the station. It was nearly dark, but on the hill, above the river, he could see the outline of the castle.

II

YES, there it was. It looked like a derelict warehouse, before the floodlighting went on and etherealized it. It sat on the rock above the narrow river, pockmarked with innumerable slit windows, through which neither light nor air ever seemed to penetrate. Yet Tomavich would have been glad of it. . . .

. . . I confess I was a little disappointed when you told me that you had no discussions. Discussion keeps people alert. . . .

. . . Your castle . . . If only I could come there, Alan . . . We should turn it into a university . . . It would be an island of enlightenment . . . We should make it famous. . . .

As the Sneak led him through the long narrow-vaulted passages he had the same impression he had had the first time, of walking through a folding telescope from the broad end, each passage like a tube, each tube smaller than the one before, and finally, right at the end, the minute circle of the yard, with the prisoners revolving inside it.

The wicket gate was opened. There they all were, tramping round and round as usual.

'Alan!'

It was Simon Dempster. He came forward, his hand outstretched, smiling, almost hospitable, as though the castle were a country house.

'We heard you were coming back. I *am* glad to see you. What a time you must have had!'

Soon there was a crowd round him. Delicately Simon withdrew him.

'We've got a bed for you in the hospital. What's happened to your head? Don't answer any questions. They've all been told to leave you alone.'

The bed was waiting for him. It was in a big room, like the ward in the Josephine-strasse, with barred windows facing inwards on to the court-yard and outwards on to the leafless wood. The medical officer told him he was to stay there. His head had to be treated and he needed a rest and a special diet. He did not object. It was quiet and he did not have to go out on *appel*. His head was treated each day. Treidfeld came in every morning and evening to count the sick, but he seldom saw the other Germans. There were only three men in the room and they asked him no questions. He enjoyed his detachment, and liked to lie back and hear the footsteps of his friends pacing in the yard. It was better than the Josephine-strasse, far better. The terrible sense of being forgotten went; he knew where he was, and that some day he would get out. If he wanted companionship, it was there and he had only to ask for it. At night, though, there was only one sentry in the yard, and he was always listening for the pad pad pad of the single steps; they got on his nerves, so that he did not go to sleep until late. He still had those parched dreams of endless nothingness and woke up dry and sterile, feeling that his spirit had been taken from him. But he was going to be different now. His surroundings would no longer victimize him. In the few weeks he had been away he had grown up more than in all the years before. He had been given a jolt. He wanted to stay jolted, to keep the momentum. The castle, this time, was not going to get the better of him.

'I shall not run away from you,' he thought, 'as the three of us did before.' But at first he was not sure what he was going to do.

Neither the castle nor its inhabitants had changed much. It was colder, and that was about all the difference. Four times a day he heard the sirens going, and outside in the yard the Brigadier's voice shouting to the prisoners to fall in and to dismiss. The German rations for the day were chalked on the blackboard; they were still the same . . . Turnips, soup, kohl rabbi, and once a week an issue of cheese. Simon came in each morning with the gossip. The gossip was just the same. Colonel Anstruther had not come back, and everybody thought very badly of him. The Commandant was supposed to have had a row with Lissow. The pipes had burst, and Lissow said there was no labour to mend them. Harry Ferguson brought Alan's meals across the court-yard. His red face was as good as a tonic. He seemed to like the winter. Bill Franklin told him when the war was going to end and where the invasion was coming.

Major Ford was busier than ever. The first day Alan was back he saw Ford sitting in his usual window, raising and lowering his handkerchief. Since their escape he had become more than ever like a human switchboard; almost everything in the castle went by way of him. He spent a whole morning in the hospital with Alan, taking notes in code about the escape and about the Josephine-strasse.

'I'm not going to ask you about Tug now,' he said. 'Wait till you've had a rest. Then I'd like you to tell us all about it.'

Alan had told his friends the bare facts about Tug's death, and they had not pressed him for more. Later he would tell them all that had happened. He told Ford about Tomavich and Eulenstein and Stromers. Ford questioned him very closely about Eulenstein's journey to Vienna; and out came the whole story about the villa and the interview with the Gauleiter, and the collaborator, Prince Ferschenberg. It gave Ford the feeling that he was in charge of something again, doing something with some point.

'Thank you, Alan,' he said at the end. 'A masterly feat of memory. I'll see that it gets to the proper channel.'

'What will you do with it all?' Alan asked.

'Ah, we have ways and means,' Ford replied darkly. He leant forward and lowered his voice. 'You know we have a proper wireless here now. We have friends in the village. Various contacts have been established. There are people who will be very grateful for this information.'

'D'you mean we've got a transmitting set?'

'Oh, no,' said Ford. 'That would be too much to hope. No, just a proper receiving set. There are ways of transmitting information, though, even if we can't use wireless. I can promise you all you've told me won't be wasted.'

And off he went, to do whatever he did do, and another post in the underground relay would be dispatched, and somewhere, some day, all these names — Ferschenberg, Eulenstein, Stromers, Tomavich — would be docketed and remembered.

As he got better, Alan began to walk about the castle. The prisoners were at their usual occupations. They drew potatoes and parcels and carried their food upstairs on wooden boards. They cooked in the big dining-rooms and made toast in the afternoon, queueing for the stoves; and in the silence-room they studied for exams and read novels and wrote novels. A good many of them stayed in bed all morning now, because of the cold. And every evening they heard the British news. This was the big moment of the day. In the past it had come in irregularly, and had never been reliable. Now they had it from their own set. Not a dozen people knew where the set was kept. It was said to be so well hidden that the Germans would never find it. The news was taken down direct and dictated to half a dozen readers, who gave it out in the big dining-rooms.

Fred Martin and Peter Wade were still bored and still arguing. It was so cold now that they wore their greatcoats indoors and huddled like witches round the meagre stoves. Alan could no longer join these conversations.

'You're very silent, Alan, since you came back,' Peter said. 'Is it your head that's hurting you?'

'It is a little.'

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It would do as an excuse. He did not want to join in, that was all.

The voices went on. They talked in the cheerless evenings. Often the lights fused, or there was an air-raid and the Germans switched off at the main. The airmen could not see to design their aircraft, the sailors could not see to design their yachts. There was not enough fat to spare for lamps. They opened the stove and pushed in old boxes until the flames flared up and the sentries outside shouted 'Black-out'! Fred Martin talked about his latest purchases.

'I gave a pair of shoes for a lighter.'

'You've been done.'

'No, I bloody well haven't.'

'Yes, you bloody well have.'

'No, I haven't. They were old shoes.'

'We'll be out of fuel again soon. Then what's the use of a lighter?'

'I'll trade it before we run out.'

'Christ, it's cold. Wish I had a coat like old Anstruther.'

'Time he was back. Where the hell's he gone?'

'Propaganda camp, so they say.'

'Shouldn't wonder. That'd be a nice racket.'

'If he's gone to a propaganda camp,' said Peter Wade, 'then he's for it after the war.'

'Why? Wouldn't you go if you had the chance?'

'No, certainly not. Nor would you.'

'Anything to get out of this place. Why won't they let us have walks? If you ask me, we don't make nearly enough row.'

'The Brigadier's protested.'

'What the hell's the use of that?'

'You try then.'

'All I'm saying is that the only way to treat these Huns is to shout at them.'

'All right, you go and shout at them and see what happens.'

'All right, I will. It'll do me good to shout at someone. It'd do us all good.'

'Why not get yourself some work?' someone suggested.

'Work? You can't work in this place.'

Bill Franklin had joined this group since Alan had been away. It was a surprise to Alan, because Bill had always considered Peter Wade and Fred Martin and their friends beneath him. They were technical and commercial. They had none of Simon Dempster's *savoir-faire*, and they were terribly noisy. All the same there he was amongst them, still expostulating about his imprisonment, still lecturing about the invasion.

'Shouldn't be long now . . . I put it at March.' He gave his reasons.

'Well, boys, my fourth March in the shaft. I shall just be here to celebrate my anniversary. What a treat. Four bloody years on a Red Cross parcel. Makes you think, doesn't it?'

And he laughed a nervous, high-pitched laugh, which was becoming a habit with him. His voice was not under control. He had become very possessive of small things and bossed people about if they were late for a meal or did anything out of routine. He kept on telling them that they must make the best of prison.

'Here we are and that's all there is to it,' he said. But he did nothing about it himself. He gambled more than ever and had laid very heavy bets about the end of the war and the invasion. He could not look people in the eyes. He had a young though rather silly face, but his manners were those of an old man. He stood possessively in front of the stove, dipping his knees, and sat creaking in a packing-case arm-chair, unable to understand why the Russians were having so many victories. He wanted all the victories to be British. He didn't care for the Americans either, but they were better than the Russians. He had acquired a looking-glass, which nobody else was allowed to use. 'If you don't mind,' he said, 'I won't lend it to you. You've got to look after yourself in this place if you want any comfort at all.' Prison was going to be his *thing*, just as at Mrs. Willoughby Howarth's everybody had to have a *thing*, an attachment, some subject to talk about. He was going to talk about it for years, appealing through it to women, imposing it on his wife, on friends, in

clubs, unless somebody told him, warned him what was happening to him. But no one did tell him. It was too much trouble. He would only fly off the handle, and then there would be a row; and after all they had to live together.

At night the gramophones blared across the court-yard, and in the hospital Alan heard them; on one floor Beethoven or Mozart, spreading their illusions of serenity, on another Bing Crosby and Zarah Leander, making the prisoners feel restless. He wished he could get going. He had the list of books Tomavich had suggested to him, and several of them were in the library, but while his head was still bad and he could not sleep he did not feel like settling down to any studying. He wandered about the rooms, expecting something to happen which could not happen unless he started it. It made him sad to see the bed in which Tug had slept and he found himself almost relishing this sadness. He was for a little while in a dreamy state, and yet he despised this dreaminess. He went to the church services which the padre held in one of the big dining-rooms. The padre had a soft voice and spoke the beautiful words of the Protestant ritual soothingly. Alan listened with pleasure, but something in him was revolted. The hymns were such a drone, and most of their words so sugary. People went to church because it reminded them of home: Simon of the village church where his father read the lesson and stopped outside to gossip with the farmers; Harry Ferguson of his wife in her best clothes with the two scrubbed children by their side; the regular soldiers of the spit-and-polish parade and the battalion singing the National Anthem. Church was a little of England, a little of the lost world, a little of home. What else was there? They went to the altar, and knelt for the bread and wine, and the padre lifted his hands and eyes . . . ' . . . Hear what comfortable words our Saviour Christ saith . . . ' Comfort, comfort, comfort, that was what they all wanted.

There was a memorial service for Tug, to which Alan went with Jim Irving. He had been shocked when Jim first came to visit him in the hospital. He was accustomed to moods. They were part of the castle's repertoire. But Jim seemed so deep in

the trough of the wave; and Alan felt responsible, because he had escaped instead of Jim and had the days in the open air.

'You're very glum,' he said. 'What's up?'

'I'm all right.'

Tug had said that Jim looked dissipated. His face was very pale, and the black arch of hair, starting low down on his forehead in a widow's peak, accentuated it.

'Sorry we couldn't get your story home,' Alan said.

'What story was that?'

'The one you gave me. The one about my dream. Tug and I read it one afternoon when we were lying up. Have you done any more?'

'No, nothing.'

'I liked it. Tug thought it was crazy. I hope you've kept a copy.'

'It doesn't matter.'

He sat on the end of Alan's bed, pulling at a blanket, listless and uncommunicative.

'They say you've taken to religion, Jim.'

No answer.

'D'you still do the messing?' Alan said, getting bored with him.

'No, Harry's taken it over.'

'Why not come in here for a rest? It's not a bad place. You don't have to go on parades.'

It was like talking to a stone.

Geoff Larkin had some French phrases for Jim's mood.

'Jim's got *ennui*. Everyone gets it here. You can't help it. I've had it often. Rather badly at one time. If you think at all, you're bound to get it. It's the *dégoût de la vie*. Jim's taken to Christianity. I knew it would come.'

'What d'you mean, taken to Christianity?'

'He's part of the religious revival. You always get it in a war. He spends hours with the padre now.'

'Is that consoling?'

'I shouldn't think so. Still, it'll keep him away from religion.'

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Very few padres are religious. Now there aren't any rich patrons to encourage scholars, the scholars go into the church. This padre is very typical. Jim won't get much out of him. It'll be the priests next. I shouldn't be surprised if he turned Catholic. It's another of the stages.'

'What are all these stages?'

'Oh, we all go through them. You're going through them. Jim's going through them. He's gone through quite a lot since you escaped. At first it was Baudelaire. He used to sit up with a fat-lamp reading the *Fleurs du Mal*.'

'What's that?'

'Oh, it's one of the symptoms. Baudelaire's all very well and much in vogue these days, but . . .' And he began to give his opinions about French poetry. He was rather patronizing about Jim. Perhaps he was jealous about Jim being temperamental. That was his prerogative. He was the Artist. He had not changed. He still sat at windows, sketching away and rubbing out, determined to *get something done*.

Jim and Alan stood side by side at the memorial service for Tug. As a concession, the Germans had opened the castle's private chapel. It had been kept closed since last winter, when the prisoners dug tunnels under it and took out the pews for firewood. It had been built long ago by the old Saxon family who built the castle. Inside it was very tall and narrow, with three wooden galleries, rather like a theatre. Above the altar hung a portrait of the Redeemer, showing Him as a young bearded man with strong and sympathetic features, without a halo, and without the usual premonitions of agony. Almost all the prisoners had come to the service. Several German officers were there. They loved funerals. They were especially fond of any British ceremonies. Last year the Brigadier had ordered a special parade for the King's birthday, at which all the officers wore their best clothes and polished themselves up; the Germans talked about it for days afterwards.

The senior officers sat in the well of the chapel, under the galleries, the Brigadier in front, wearing many medals from the

last war. A withered wreath hung from the lowest gallery, above the names of the Germans from Durheim village who had been killed in that war, and the windows faced out across the fields.

Alan thought of Tug with pride and remembered how he used to throw the mugs, in order to work off his bad feelings. If only he were alive . . . it was necessary, in the castle and in the world, to have friends, and friendship was impossible with the false, the self-opinionated, the inaccessible. The organ pealed and they sang the hymn 'Abide with Me'. Jim was staring fixedly at the portrait on the altar. Alan did not sing, but the yearning pleading words crept over him. His eyes strayed to the fields outside. They were white with snow, and the sun was white and the sky was white, and clumps of bare trees stood in the midst like refugees. He realized that human beings are alone and without protection in the world. The wave of death stole up to him and he seemed to be struggling in an icy sea.

The padre mounted a turret stairway into the pulpit, which projected above the heads of the senior officers, on a level with the lowest gallery. He had a contented but rather pinched face, like a jolly little mouse. He liked people to be happy, as he was himself with his books about the Byzantine Empire, and he longed for them all to see that everything is for the best. He recounted Tug's short life, his jobs, his escapes, all the trivial pointless achievement, and he reminded them of Tug's open heart and impetuosity. He made him live again for an instant or two, and many of the prisoners were smiling, thinking of things Tug had done. At the end the padre said: 'Above all, Tug was a Christian. He gave his life against injustice. He could not stand by while a weaker man was molested and maltreated. He was an Englishman and a Christian. . . .'

It jarred on Alan. It spoiled all that he had said before. How did being a Christian square with the night in the barn, when Tug had gone across to the Polish woman? Would it be said, he could not stand idle when a woman wanted to sleep with him and he with her? Or was that somehow forgiven? Alan did not know why Christianity had to be drawn in, unless it

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was out of courtesy, because they were in a Christian church. He didn't think Tug had ever thought of deliberately following Christ. He would rather have heard it said, we admired him and liked him, and we miss him because he was a man, and that would be label enough.

The prisoners trooped out into the court-yard and the Germans locked up the chapel. Alan walked up and down by himself. His feelings were dormant and he did not even experience any resentment of death. He wouldn't forget Tug, who had been an individual and would remain even if all the rest of the past receded and evaporated. Tug had been with him at the crossroads of his life. Both of them were adventurous. Tug explosively, Alan more contained. The escape seemed now like an Odyssey, a vague and delightful pilgrimage to nowhere in particular. They had been content, travelling through new landscapes, making chance friends, and always having that provocative sense of being at odds with the world and needing to get the better of it.

Simon Dempster came up to him.

'Do you want to talk?' he asked politely. 'Tell me if I'm interrupting.'

'No, you're not.'

'I always ask people. This place is worse than a club. You can't shake off your friends.'

He got into step. He was very smart in his best uniform and he wore the ribbon of the M.C., awarded him three years ago in France. His smooth face glowed and the lines of the comb showed in his fair sleeked hair.

After a little he said: 'What did you think of the padre's address?'

'Oh, it was all right.'

'I thought it very restrained. I was glad he didn't become sentimental, weren't you? He is giving me a copy of what he said, to send to Tug's family.'

'Yes?'

'They'll be glad to know about it, don't you think? It's all we can do.' They walked a little, as the crowd broke up. 'I think we

all need a little gaiety,' Simon said. 'What about a supper party? We might get some schnapps from Rudi. We were going to have a party before you went. How do you feel about it?'

He turned towards Alan, eager at the thought of hospitality.

'Would you like me to ask the same guests?'

'Who were they?' said Simon, pretending to forget.

'Morshead and Litauer.' It had been in Alan's mind. They were the ones he wanted to see.

'Ah, yes. We were going to break new ground. I think they might both be *tremendously* interesting.' Simon hesitated. 'It's just that . . .' He didn't want them at all really, and was hoping Alan would give him a chance not to have them. Alan said nothing. 'I just wonder if they won't be rather shy,' said Simon.

'Certainly not Marcus Litauer. I shouldn't think he knows what the word means.'

'No,' said Simon, with worlds of undertone and implication. 'No, I suppose not. And of course it'll be much simpler, with Brian not here. Brian was just a shade anti-semitic. I don't care for a lot of Jews all together myself. I mean, not more than two or three at once.'

'Shall I ask him, then?'

'Yes, ask him, Alan. Ask him for Tuesday night,' said Simon, with sudden enthusiasm, now that there was no escaping it.

'And Morshead?'

'Yes, and Morshead. What will he talk about? One likes to be forewarned.'

'I don't know. He reads economics all day.'

'Oh. We *must* get some schnapps then. Morshead and Litauer. It'll be quite a change. I'm all for it.'

III

SIMON prepared the supper party. He was like an excited child. He wanted everything to be as he had known it at home. They would try to shut out the prison. The meal was laid in one of

the small bedrooms, with blankets covering the bunks, the stove lit with scrounged coal, the plates in the oven, the knives and forks matching, the mugs not cracked, and glasses borrowed to drink the schnapps.

'If only we had some flowers,' Simon said. He made feminine darting gestures, cleaning, polishing, anxious that all should enjoy themselves. He alone had experience of the great world and he wanted to reproduce all that he could of it. Harry Ferguson and Jim were to do the cooking and bring in the food, but Simon prepared the menu, copying it out in French and putting it in front of the guests' places. Most of the mess supplies for the next week went into it. There was to be soup, with breadcrumbs; then meat and carrots from the Red Cross, with roast potatoes from the German rations; and after that a jam tart, for which all their biscuits had been crushed to make the pastry. Coffee to finish up with, and a cigar for each one of them, out of the small private stock sent Simon by his father.

All day he was hurrying about, borrowing, supervising, reminding them to be punctual, writing out cards. . . .

'Le Commandant Laharpe . . .' Laharpe was Simon's own guest, invited to raise the tone and provide some wit and sophistication . . . Captain Marcus Litauer . . . Captain . . . what is Morshead's Christian name, Alan? . . . does he have one?'

The table was set, the black-out drawn down, hiding the bars, the electric light had not fused, and the plates were warming in the big oven.

'There!' said Simon, standing back.

They all congratulated him, and he glowed and smiled, deprecating the praise.

'If only we had candles!' he exclaimed.

'Where am I sitting?' Bill Franklin asked.

'Between Litauer and Laharpe,' said Simon innocently. He had done it on purpose. Bill did not like Jews, no more than Brian, and he could not speak French.

'Christ almighty!' said Bill. 'Right among the Foreign Legion.'

'I thought it would be good for you,' said Simon.

'Oh, let 'em all come. Yids, Frogs, anything you like. I'm used to it now . . .' and he laughed his nervous laugh, and muttered to himself, with an indignant effort at good humour.

Laharpe arrived, very Gallic and punctilious, in a white jacket, his thick hair shining like an advertisement. He was broad and muscular, and reminded Alan of a debauched lion. Simon liked him because he was picturesque and had been everywhere and seen everything. He had to be introduced, although he had been a prisoner in the castle two years and saw them four times a day on parade. There were bows on his side and awkward movements on the part of the English, all part of the make-believe. He put them at their ease by speaking English. Only Geoffrey Larkin stuck to French, speaking in a stilted school accent. Morshead and Litauer arrived and there were more introductions. They all had a little schnapps to start with to break the ice. Marcus knew at once what was expected of him, and burst into flamboyant praise of the dinner-table.

'A banquet!' he exclaimed. And where did the glasses come from? You did not tell us to expect this, my young friend . . . And this schnapps! why, it *ees* schnapps . . . who is your sentry? . . . do you always live in such state? . . . why, it is pre-war. . .'

Morshead said nothing. His sharp eyes behind the glasses were taking them in. He was not shy, but he was not going to talk unnecessarily. They sat down, Simon in the middle, regulating the conversation, and Harry brought in the soup.

'Well, when's the invasion coming?' Bill asked Laharpe.

'Soon, I hope.'

'Do you think it'll be in France?'

'I fancy so.'

'My own view is that it'll come in Norway. I reckon on a landing somewhere near Bergen. After that we'll nip across to Denmark. We should get naval command of the Skaggerak. That's my view. I don't know what yours is . . .'

Simon sighed faintly.

'You're an economist, aren't you?' he said to Morshead, a little graciously.

'I read economics.'

'The dismal science,' said Larkin. 'Doesn't it drive you off your head?'

'I've been doing it several years. I think I've kept my sanity. As much as any prisoner, anyhow.'

'Everyone seems to be reading economics. It looks as though success of any kind is going to be impossible without it. If I have to learn anything I shall start on Russian.'

'I've learnt while I've been a prisoner,' said Morshead. 'There's a French orderly who was born in Russia who'll teach you.'

'I haven't time at the moment,' said Larkin. 'I shan't be able to get going until I've finished my work.'

'What work is that?'

'I'm painting,' said Larkin in a sacred voice, as if he were having a baby.

'How long did it take you to learn Russian?' Alan asked. He wanted to get on terms with Morshead and tell him about Tomavich and Stromers and the others at the Josephine-strasse. He wanted to show that he was not the same as his friends and that Morshead need not think of him with hostility. For that was how Morshead did think of them, there was no doubt of it, although he behaved very politely and had come in his best suit of battle-dress, with his hair smarmed down. He was watching them all the time.

Jim was deeply involved with Marcus Litauer, leaning right forward and talking very quietly and listening very attentively, as if to block out all the other conversations. Marcus was probably talking about his dreams and Alan was glad to see Jim a little more animated; it was the first time for days he had shown any interest in anything. Marcus threw out his hands, shrugged his shoulders, crinkled his eyes. He too was watching, not suspiciously like Morshead, but with an amused impartial curiosity. He was enjoying himself. He had drunk two glasses of schnapps already and was going purple in the face.

Harry Ferguson was very red too. He was always ruddy and chubby, and now he had been laughing. He was sitting opposite

Laharpe and Laharpe was evidently being witty. Foreigners astonished Harry. He had never been abroad until now, and he had found them as peculiar as he had always been led to believe. He didn't dislike them, but he didn't know what to make of them and he couldn't help feeling that life would be much simpler without them. He accepted the conventional ideas about each nation. The Germans were stupid and brutal and sheeplike. The Poles were romantic and impossible. The Dutch were clumsy, tough and even more commercial than the English. The Russians nobody knew anything about at all. As for the French, they were undependable and unprincipled, but knew how to have a good time. So Harry sat fascinated opposite Laharpe, hanging on his words, and admiring the civilized little gestures and the occasional epigram.

Simon Dempster turned from left to right, slipping in a word at the right moment, never really taking in what anyone said to him. 'How interesting . . . *really* . . . now what I would like to know is . . . ' but when someone took him seriously and began to tell him the answer, he had turned away and was talking to someone else, his ear always to the table.

Half-way through the meal the door opened and the Sneak and another German entered on their nightly rounds. The conversation stopped. 'Good evening, gentlemen,' said the Sneak in his tepid ingratiating voice, and the two of them walked slowly round the decorated table, sniffing and clumping in their heavy boots. Their uniforms were ill-fitting and very shabby, and they looked like poor relations or country cousins. They pointed out to one another the glasses, the blankets over the bunks, the French menus. Although English high life was ridiculed daily in the German papers, most of the Germans Alan had met, down to the poorest, seemed to have a kind of veneration for it, and here was a replica for them, right under their eyes. It was part of a ceremonial and any ceremonial was dear to them. They stood awkwardly behind the chairs, giving that eternal impression of wanting to join in.

'*Alles gut, hein?*' said the Sneak jovially.

Nobody answered.

As they went out Alan heard the Sneak whisper to the other: 'Would you swear it on oath?'

'They're suspicious about the drink,' said Alan. 'You'd better drink up if Rudi's not to get into trouble. They might come back and ask how we got it.'

They emptied their glasses. There hadn't been much in them, but enough, on top of light stomachs, to make them merry and loosen their tongues. Alan wanted to draw Morshead. He didn't like to start talking about Tomavich himself; so he thought of working the conversation round to it.

'The Sneak's been more obsequious lately,' he said. 'I reckon they're worried about Mussolini going.'

'The first of the rats,' said Bill. 'They'll all have left the ship soon. Finns, Bulgars, what have you. . . .'

'What do you think about Italy packing up?' Simon asked Morshead. 'I admired the little king for pushing Musso out, didn't you?'

'It might have been better if he pushed him out before the war started . . . or else never let him in at all,' said Morshead.

'Oh, yes, *quite*. I suppose so. But things were difficult for him, weren't they?' Simon leant forward, dropping his eyes, not able to think out what he meant and expecting assistance. Morshead gave him none. 'He was the King,' Morshead said. 'If he'd wanted to get rid of him, he could have done so.'

'Yes . . . yes . . . I suppose he could. What do you think will happen now?'

'I don't know. I imagine the Germans are well prepared. In my opinion the King's been pretty tricky, calling the Americans and ourselves in. He's done it because he's scared of a revolution.'

'Revolution?' said Simon.

Alan saw Morshead's eyes glint.

'If the fascists don't get out,' said Morshead, 'there'll be workers' risings all over Italy. No more King, no more nobility, no more nothing. So he calls the Allies in to save him. He got

Mussolini in to save the upper class at the end of the last war, and now he's got rid of him to save them at the end of this.'

A slight shock, a recoil, hardly perceptible, like the tremor of a far-off earthquake, was to be detected as he spoke of the upper class. Alan had never heard his mess speak of classes. He had scarcely heard them spoken of himself until he met Tomavich. He didn't like the idea of lumping people together and labelling them in vertical compartments, upper, middle, lower middle, lower. People were individuals, a mosaic, a shifting mosaic altering every minute and impossible to fix. But he was interested now, and he wanted Morshead to speak his mind, as he had that night in the silence-room. So he encouraged him, hoping he would say something to offend his friends.

'Do you think the same will happen in Germany?' he asked.

'Exactly the same. The set-up is almost the same. The people who helped the fascists into power are the same sort, and when they've made up their minds the fascists have lost the war they'll try to get rid of them. If they don't the war will go on till everyone is starving and everything is destroyed and there'll be a revolution in which they lose everything. So they'll call in the Allies, or try to.'

'You mean the German Army will do this?' said Simon.

'Not only the Army.'

'It may be very stupid of me,' said Simon apologetically, 'but who exactly are the fascists?'

He spoke the word with the least hesitation, with an air of slight ridicule and distaste. Morshead's manner became didactic. He didn't understand, he had no polish. He thought that when he was asked a question by Simon he was expected to answer it in detail; and so he began telling them all about the history of the nazi movement.

'The first nazis were the lower middle class, in the main . . . They were the rank and file. They kept the thing going through the twenties. The upper middle class didn't get interested until the depression in the thirties, when they were scared of communism. They were never on good terms with the old gang

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and I don't believe they are now. The first nazis were mostly their social inferiors. The split between them was the real cause of the trouble in 1934, when Röhm was murdered. Röhm was a revolutionary, one of the originals, one of the Brownshirts. The S.S. was the opposite. The sons of the rich went into it, the ones who came in at the last moment, the rich young men who didn't want to lose their possessions.'

Alan looked at Bill Franklin.

'Really . . .' cooed Simon, registering great interest. 'I never realized that.' He glanced round the table, drawing them in.

'The men who got Hitler and Mussolini in at the end were another bunch still,' said Morshead. 'Do you know the word traditionalist? I should call them that. Noblemen. The men who'd been at the best schools and came from the best families. The industrialists financed Hitler and Mussolini, but it was the real old gang who got them into power. The landed gentry, The courtiers. The friends of the King of Italy and the friends of Hindenburg. In both countries the head of the state was won round to the dictator by men in his own circle who had an influence on him. The King didn't like the fascists to start with. Hindenburg couldn't stand Hitler. The fascists were middle class. They didn't know how to behave. They didn't know how to pass the port,' said Morshead with deliberate malice, looking round the table. 'All the same, there was no alternative but the communists, so in they came, and the traditionalists got another lease of life. And now that the gamble's gone wrong, and they're scared of communism again, they're calling in the Allies. It's amazing how some of these old families keep on at it. They belong to the feudal period, and yet they're still powerful, still pulling the strings. Here in Germany, as soon as it suits, they'll chuck the nazis and everyone else. Grednitz here in this camp is what I would call a traditionalist. He has an estate somewhere, hasn't he?'

'East Prussia,' said Simon.

'I'm not surprised. He's the kind of man Hindenburg would have liked. And Lissow is one of the early nazis. You can see

how they hate one another, but for the time being they have to stick together. Later, we shall see.'

'What are you talking about up there?' called out Bill Franklin. 'You all look deadly serious.'

'Politics,' said Larkin.

'Politics, eh? We've been talking politics too. Laharpe wants to restore the King of France, don't you, Laharpe? Damn good idea, if you ask me.'

'Is there really a possibility?' Simon said. He had had enough of Morshead for the time being. 'Versailles again? That would be exciting.'

'Who can tell?' said Laharpe, shrugging his shoulders.

'Marie Antoinette! She's still one of my heroines. So you think there might be a restoration?'

'Possibly.'

Laharpe didn't really care. He was a wanderer. He loved colour and excitement. If the West could provide it he stayed in the West; if it could not he went to the Orient, to India, Brazil, Africa, and brought back precious stones, totem poles and cockatoos. His apartment in Paris was famous, though he seldom lived there; it was a cross between an aviary and a museum. Big firms employed him to go on missions for them to distant countries and he used their money to answer his craving for the remote and the outlandish. Often he went alone. He had taken a passing interest in French politics in the thirties. People had been looking wildly for heroes, saviours. Quite a group had collected round him. He was 'not political', he was honest, a little magnetic. Loving colour, he naturally loved the past and could easily be appealed to through the glories of some mystic national revival. Clever men had thought of making use of his glamour and he had been sold the idea of a restoration. A King would come back to Versailles, and he would be somewhere near the throne, a popular hero; and behind them would be certain bankers, certain business men, certain ministers. It had all been suggested, but it had not come off.

Prison chafed him terribly. He had so much energy that he

felt it keenly. He did violent exercises in the theatre, which was used in the morning as a gymnasium, and the English liked him because he played games in the court-yard and so was one of them. He played with immense enthusiasm, almost with abandon, as if his life depended on it.

They all listened to him now, as he began to talk about his travels, and Alan felt envious. He was envious of all these men who had had time to live. Soon Laharpe's tongue found its natural groove, and he was describing the women he had met in many countries. He was lost in his love for physical beauty. The English listened, at first with embarrassment; but Alan noticed a regret, a sense that they had missed something. Only Larkin looked superior. Laharpe was talking better than Geoff had ever yet talked. He held them all; and so Geoff had to put on his aloof critical air, sitting with his chin on his clasped hands, gazing into the distance of the higher artistic stratosphere.

Alan half listened, half yielded to his imagination. Confused pictures came into his head: something out of a coloured travel film, something out of the *Geographical Magazine*. He saw dancers with tight naked breasts from Indo-China, with shimmering skirts that touched the floor; tribal women on the plains of Asia, with broad high cheeks and heart-shaped faces, like some of the German peasants; rich Spaniards in white dresses sitting out of doors in the bars of Rio and Buenos Aires; and he saw dancing in cafés in the hills and by fires, to music that sounded casual and far-off, almost absent-minded.

Laharpe became more civilized. He talked about Italy. In his apartment in Paris, he said, he had a map on which he had marked in red all the journeys he had ever made. All the little known regions of the world were criss-crossed with red, but most of the West, even France, was bare. Only Italy, Italy and parts of Spain he loved. He was speaking of the burnt undulating country south of Siena, when Jim Irving suddenly interrupted:

'Do you know a village called Barrasino?'

'Barrasino? Yes, I do know it. It is one of my special places.'

Where they have the fair in April. Have you been there? I thought it was all my own.'

'I went there by chance. I was walking. I've always wanted to go back.'

'Ah, we shall go back together. Were you there in April?'

'Yes, in April. I couldn't come away.'

'And so you heard the singing?'

'Yes, I heard it.'

'What singing? What is this place? I have never heard of it,' said Marcus.

'You must find it yourself, must he not?' said Laharpe, looking at Jim.

'Very well. You wish to keep it to yourselves. I too have my secret villages. And what were you doing in Italy, walking, young man?' Marcus said to Jim.

'Escaping.'

'From what?'

'From England, I suppose.'

Laharpe smiled.

'Why does everyone talk about getting out of England?' said Harry. 'Tug was just the same.'

'It's as we want to get out of this castle. I felt cramped there. So did Tug.'

So did I, thought Alan. I didn't know it at the time, but that was what happened to me. I was glad when we went to Norway. I was content when we were escaping. Even in that cell, listening to Tomavich, it was new. I want something new.

'I can't understand it,' said Harry. 'No, I can't understand it.'

'You're married,' said Jim. 'You're settled.'

'That must be it.'

'You don't want to escape from here, because you've got something to go back to. It's the ones who've got nothing particular to go back to who want to escape. Brian. Alan. Tug. Myself.'

'England's good enough for me,' said Bill Franklin pointlessly.

The evening was going well. Marcus had paid compliments

about every course and Laharpe had been all that Simon had hoped he would be. They came to the cigars and Marcus made a face like a prima donna accepting a bouquet . . . for me? . . . this is too kind.

It was necessary to bring Morshead in again. Alan had been conscious of him sitting there dourly, crunching a jam tart, unprepossessing, analytical, while Laharpe was talking. How different the two of them were. Laharpe saw all the flesh of life, Morshead saw all the bones. Both seemed to exist near the centre, the essentials, exploring outwards to the fringes; and Alan himself was still on the fringe, trying to move inwards.

'What do you think about a restoration in France?' said Simon.

'I don't think about it,' said Morshead.

'I suppose you don't agree with Laharpe?'

'No.'

'Would you call him a fascist?' Simon asked, with an air of sham innocence.

'He might be. I don't know him. I should think he'd be best employed travelling.'

'How lucky we are!' said Simon. 'We don't seem to have any of these complications in England. We *are* terribly lucky, aren't we?'

'There are plenty of potential fascists in England,' said Morshead. 'Plenty of bored young men — or there will be after the war — for the ranks, plenty of business men to give them money, plenty of string pullers to give them a hand.'

'You said the head of the state was used to get the fascists into power in Germany and Italy,' said Alan. 'Do you think it could be done in England?'

'I don't know about now. Quite an effort was made at the time of the abdication. Quite a lot of people then wanted to use the King for their own ends.'

'Surely not?' said Simon.

'Certainly. You get a vain man at the head of the state, and a few powerful people who know what they want in touch with him, and anything might happen. There are all the symptoms

of fascism in England, of course there are. It's all the same civilization as Europe. Do you remember the General Strike? All the usual elements appeared then. The storm troopers may not have used rubber truncheons. They became special constables. They didn't know what it was about, hadn't the least idea. It was just a chance for a fight. The workers were getting uppish, that was all.'

'What's that about the General Strike?' said Bill loudly from the other end of the table. 'I drove a bus. I was only sixteen. Christ, we had a time. All over the place. Bloody good fun.'

Jim Irving went to a side-table to make the coffee and the orderly Fell came in to wash the dishes. Simon saw the hostility between Morshead and Bill Franklin and diverted it by saying to Marcus: 'Shall we ever be allowed to see your dream-book?'

'Never, never!' Marcus exclaimed, throwing up his hands. 'It would ruin my clientele. But tell me your own dreams.'

'I've been meaning to . . . I think I almost will . . .' said Simon. 'Can you really interpret them?'

'Mine wouldn't bear repeating,' said Bill dashingly.

'But you may repeat them to me, my dear young man,' said Marcus. 'It will be in the confessional. Nobody will know. And think . . . you will be contributing to science.'

'No, thanks. You can keep science.'

He puffed angrily at his cigar. To be called 'my dear young man' and by a Jew!

'Do you dream?' Laharpe asked Harry.

'Yes. Almost always about sex.'

'About your wife, no doubt.'

'Hardly at all. About all kinds of people. To tell you the truth, quite often about Tony Masterman. I don't know how I shall explain it when I get home.'

'You've got ideas?' said Marcus slyly.

'Yes,' said Harry going red and laughing.

'What do you dream about?' Alan asked Jim.

'Nothing,' he said curtly. He was standing at the side-table, pouring out coffee, and kept his back to them.

'You mean, you don't dream at all?'

'Yes, I dream.'

'How do you mean, nothing?'

'Nothing happens, that's what I mean.'

He handed the coffee cups to Harry Ferguson. He didn't want to talk; the safety curtain had come down. Alan saw Marcus looking at him, interested. People were usually interested in Jim. The aloofness was a lure; they wanted to get behind his guard.

'Nothing happens!' exclaimed Bill, who missed all the side-glances and undercurrents. 'I should think not. Nothing ever happens in this place. Three bloody years wasted.'

'Do you think they're wasted?' Morshead said, challenging him.

'I don't know what else they are.'

'I've had more chance to work than all the rest of my life.'

'Oh, if you've got the knack of studying, then it's all right. Personally I haven't.'

'Couldn't you develop it?'

'Not in this place.'

'There are plenty of worse places.'

'Such as?'

Morshead had touched Bill on the raw, on his self-pity. If the castle could really be overcome, then the self-pity was a fraud.

'Such as the concentration camps,' said Morshead.

'I mean English camps.'

'Well then, the stalags.'

'Christ, I'd ten times rather be in a stalag than here.'

'I used to think so,' said Morshead. 'I'm not sure that I do now.'

'Of course it'd be better. Work, open air, better food, games. Give me a chance and I'd be off like a shot.'

Fell looked round and Morshead caught his eye. 'We could get an opinion on that,' he said. 'I wonder what Fell thinks.'

'Sir?'

Consternation shot across Simon's face. The servants were joining in the conversation. Morshead said to Fell:

'Where would you rather be, here or in a stalag?'

Fell lurched along the table, wiping a plate. He was a Geordie and spoke with the quick soft accent, difficult to understand.

'No doubt o' that, no doubt at all. I'd rather be on less food than we have here, rather'n go back. It's more roomy, that's one thing. It's a hundred to a room and more in some of the stalags. Three-tiered bunks, too. I'd rather be here, every time I would.'

'At least you can get outside,' Bill said.

'Ah, that's true. It'll depend what kind of working party you're on, though. Where we was they sent us to the mines. That was ten hours a day and no parcels, most of the time.'

He stood behind Simon's back, water dripping from the dish-cloth, and waited to be asked more questions. He was eager to tell them about it. No one spoke, and he went on:

'If you're on one of the farms, like, it's not so bad. The grub's better an' maybe the folk are more friendly. It'll depend, though, even then.'

'Yes. Thank you, Fell,' said Simon over his shoulder, dismissing him. 'We aren't badly off. There are some camps where even a meal like this would be impossible.'

'I've just come from one,' said Alan.

'Yes, there you are.'

'I said I didn't count the non-British camps,' said Bill.

'You ought to count them. It's all part of the same thing,' said Alan. 'Isn't it, Morshead?'

'Of course it is. I don't see how you can speak as if they weren't there. We know they're there. People like Maclaren have been in them. We ought to thank our stars we've got books and all this grub.'

'All this grub!' exclaimed Bill. 'We're not like this every night. Don't you believe it.'

'Still, we're not starving. In fact we're living better than quite a number of people in England before the war.'

'Oh, nonsense,' said Bill.

'I took the trouble to work out the comparison. Would you care to see the figures?'

THE CASTLE AGAIN

'Figures will tell you anything. Everyone knows that.'

Morshead had offended him now. They were enemies for life. Morshead ended by offending Simon. He left before the siren sounded for evening *appel*, and Simon took this as a personal affront; a dinner party was a dinner party, and people should not hurry off suddenly to work.

Alan went with Morshead down the steep steps into the yard. The snow had begun again, and a light film was lying on the cobbles. It was dark, with a few stars, and no one in the yard but the sentry. They took a few turns, like goldfish in a bowl.

'Thanks for the meal,' said Morshead. Smoke curled from the red tips of their cigars and their bellies were like radiators. 'I don't know why you asked me. I'm not much on the social stuff.'

'I enjoyed what you were saying. I'm very ignorant about it.'

'A lot of people are.'

'I learnt a little from an old professor in the place I've just come back from . . .'

Morshead asked many questions about Tomavich, and they walked for a quarter of an hour.

'I run a small group of people who have discussions,' said Morshead. 'It would be interesting if you would tell them what you have seen.'

'I believe I may have to do that for the whole camp. Ford said something about it. But I'd like to come, if you have room and . . .'

'Yes, you come along. I'll tell you the times. Only don't say too much about it, otherwise it'll be thought we're a cell or a conspiracy. Some of the orderlies come, so we have to be careful.'

'I'll come as soon as my head's O.K.'

'I forgot to ask about that.'

'I'll leave hospital about the end of January. After Burns Night, probably, as soon as the hang-over wears off. Are you going?'

'No. I'm a Sassenach. Marcus'll probably get invited. He doesn't manage to miss much. He'll have enjoyed to-night.'

YES, FAREWELL

He loves his comforts. Old fox. He's a champion racketeer, you know.'

Alan met Marcus coming away, as he went up the stairs.

'What a banquet, what a banquet . . . schnapps, a cigar . . . I shall never forget it.' He took Alan by the arm. 'You must all tell me your dreams, it will do you good. Why you not tell me? Why are you all so closed up? That young man, the dark one . . . tell him . . .'

'Jim?'

'Yes, Jeem . . . all of you . . . well, good night, good night, and thank you . . .' he rocked across the court-yard and tripped on the steps.

Simon, Laharpe and Bill were still talking. The table was cleared and Jim and Harry and Fell were washing up. The blankets had been taken down from the bunks.

'I thought it was slightly unnecessary,' Simon was saying as Alan came in. 'There's no cause to be bad-mannered, ever.' They were talking about Morshead, obviously. The party had not been an entire success. When Simon saw Alan he changed the subject.

'And do you think you'll stay in Paris when the war's over?' he asked Laharpe.

'Not for long. Though Paris has a great lure for me.'

'And for me. Prunier's . . . the Rue de la Paix . . . when shall we be there again?'

They went on, thinking of their world, imagining the mahogany, the shining silver, the candlelight, the port, the women with their jewels . . . imagining . . . imagining . . .

I V

THE beginning of February 1944 was to be Alan's new start. At the end of the month he was to have a visit to the local x-ray centre, ten miles along the railway towards Dresden, to make

sure that no permanent damage had been done to his head. After that, if it was satisfactory, he would go back to sleep in his old room. He would begin to work then, on the books Tomavich had recommended and others Morshead had turned out for him. Morshead's books were rather forbidding, with names like *The Theory of Full Employment under Capitalism*, *The Problem of International Investment*, *Trade Cycles and the World Depression*, and so on. Alan supposed he would have to read them. He knew nothing. He wanted to learn, but most of all he wanted to act. He didn't know in what way he would act, but first of all, clearly, he must know something. So he would be a martyr and read economics.

Until the end of the month he read the lightest books he could find: P. G. Wodehouse, Stephen Leacock, Ogden Nash. It was a change to laugh. He read a little poetry and before the Burns Night dinner he read some of Burns. Larkin lent him a copy.

'I don't read it much now,' he said. 'I suppose you're one of his fans. Your national tradition.'

'I don't know why everyone assumes that I'm so completely Scots. It was only on my father's side and I hardly knew him.'

'You look like a Scotsman. Large and bony. And you're reserved and thorough and cautious and all those rather dreary things Scotsmen usually are. It's a mystery to me how Burns comes to be your national hero. Scott I can understand. Burns, no. He was all the things you disapprove of most.' An epigram swam within reach and he seized it. 'Only two birthdays are celebrated in the United Kingdom. Christ's and Robert Burns's. What do you make of that?'

'Do you like Burns?'

'Some of it is terrible. The lyrics aren't bad.' Geoff never committed himself to praise. He smoothed his hand across his hair. It was a habit with him now. He had grown balder, and this worried him. 'Very naïve and off the land, of course. But not bad, not at all bad.'

Several of the poems had always stirred Alan and he read them over and over, repeating them to himself.

YES, FAREWELL

Ae fond kiss and then we sever,
Ae fond kiss and part for ever.

No, that was too gloomy.

Oh, my love is like a red red rose
That's newly plucked in June!
Oh, my love is like a melody
That's sweetly played in tune!

The words came from the heart. He could imagine the country, Ayrshire, rich and fertile, with white farms and rocky shores, the country from which his father had come.

Ye banks and braes o' bonny Doon!
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair . . .

He saw the river, white and tumbling and scurrying, and a narrow bridge, and the red-faced young man, full of life and health, with his girl like him, or without her and thinking of her. Burns had been all the things the Scots were afraid of, and so they loved him. He had been the things that all men want to be, free and passionate and never old. Once a year, on January 26th, the hard and the sceptical remembered him, and through a haze of drink and talk and fellowship some of them perhaps wished that they had gone his way; and on January 27th they remembered nothing about January 26th.

Alan left that evening for the dinner, determined to go steady on the drink but looking forward to it more than to Simon's party. He had been warned of the drink from previous experience. He had had it three or four times during 1943. Dark figures distilled it under the rafters among big containers and long pipes, bending like medieval alchemists over little flames, creating for the dried-up prisoners a warm hour or two of hallucination. It was fiendish stuff. It provoked a delusive merriment and a desire to fraternize, and suddenly, without the least warning, knocked you straight out. He took very little at the dinner, which was a sober, rather stately affair. The pukka Scots attended in their kilts. They had been captured in France

in 1940, and they had broad shoulders and large bones. Alan ate as much as he could and thought how lucky he was to have two parties in so short a time. He felt very English. Someone made a speech, not about Burns at all, in which he said that the war would be over before Christmas.

'Christmas!' groaned Harry Ferguson. 'That's ten months. Make it midsummer, for the Lord's sake.'

Suddenly they heard the blaring of trumpets. The orderlies were giving a demonstration. Everyone crowded into the courtyard, some already having to be supported, but happy and affectionate. The snow covered the yard several inches deep. It was a brilliant night, and drink made them forget the cold. The walls and battlements and chimneys of the castle rose like conjurations under the new moon. Hosts of stars flickered; the faithful Pleiades seemed to be falling for ever into the middle of the yard. A soldier stepped forward through the snow. He was swathed like an Indian in a scarlet blanket and his face and hands were blackened. 'Oyez! oyez!' he shouted, but the rest was drowned. A fantastic procession poured from the soldiers' quarters, dressed in coloured blankets and trailing strips of coloured paper, red, orange, green and yellow. Up and down the yard they marched and countermarched, blowing trumpets, crashing cymbals, thumping a big drum, with one of them twirling a staff at the head and none of them in tune. Round the edge the officers made a gently swaying dark cord, with here and there a kilt and a shining cap-badge. Icicles hung from drainpipes above their heads and the moon threw an almost olive light. There were more clarions and confused cheers. Two soldiers emerged at either end, disguised as knights in armour, with hindquarters made of cardboard brilliantly painted to represent caparisons. They took stations and the man in the scarlet blanket announced them to wild cheering and drum-banging, and they tilted across the snow, pointing lances of silver cardboard. The lances shivered and both fell over and were mixed in wheels of colour, while the rest threw snowballs. The excitement grew, the moon-illuminated figures writhed and jumped, snowballs flew, and Alan thought he

was witnessing a magic Tibetan rite, or a ceremony in the jungle.

'What do you think of the show, sir?' said Corporal Fisher.

'Very good. How did you make it all?'

'Oh, the lads collected a lot of junk. See Fell?'

Fell was lurching about, trying to sing. He was dressed as a witch-doctor, with ping-pong balls for eyes.

'What about coming up for a drink, sir?'

'I've had a good deal.'

'We've got some very nice stuff . . . Been saving it for to-night. Not too strong either. The lads'll be glad to see you. I wish Mr. Wilson was here, too.'

The soldiers' quarters were hung with orange paper and a bar had been rigged up in one corner. On the wall, inside a laurel wreath, was a picture of a bleary young man, inscribed 'To Robbie Burns . . . The Immortal Memory'. The little room was full of smoke and cheerful talk. Everyone was in a very good mood. Peter Wade was there, playing a concertina, and Fred Martin talking about the drink and the fair price to pay for it. None of Alan's mess was there. Someone was singing. He felt a glow inside him.

'Here y'are, sir,' said Corporal McAllister. 'Glad to see ye back.'

'It's too much.'

'Och, no. There'll be more to come.'

He swayed slightly, and spoke with exaggerated respect. 'All for Robby Burns,' he shouted suddenly, waving his arm and knocking somebody's bonnet off. Equally suddenly he dropped his voice. 'Who is this Robby Burns?' he said. 'What did he do?'

'He died of syph,' said Corporal Gibson.

'Is tha' a fact? The old scoundrel. Is he no' still alive?'

Alan sat down at a table to take it in. Peter Wade started to play 'Auld Lang Syne', but Corporal Gibson called out, 'No, no, none o' that yet. The Jerries have no' come round yet.' So Peter Wade played 'Solitude' and everyone felt sentimental and thwarted.

THE CASTLE AGAIN

Alan was sitting next to Marcus Litauer.

'What are you doing here?' he said.

'I: I am everywhere. The wandering Jew. Have you a drink? Yes: and a glass to drink it with? Yes: Excellent, excellent. What an evening . . . are you inebriated yet? . . . the best evening since I was in prison. . . .'

'You said that to Simon the other night.'

'Did I: That was different . . . drink up your drink and they will give you another . . . all this for Robby Burns. . . .'

Marcus's fleshy face was scarlet, his eyes twinkled between little wrinkles and rolls of fat.

'You're just the man I wanted,' Alan said affectionately. 'I've got some dreams to tell you.'

'Go ahead. Why not?' He opened his plump hands and up went his eyebrows. 'Tell me everything, my dear young man.'

Alan told him of the frustrating dreams he had had in the Josephine-strasse and since he came back. In this genial mood they seemed very unimportant, a lot of fuss about nothing. Marcus listened a few minutes and then interrupted him:

'It's an old story,' he said. 'What was your diet?'

'Soup and bread, mostly.'

'Soup and bread. How can you expect to have beautiful warm dreams on soup and bread? Why, you have no powers. You would not take a girl out on soup and bread, would you? I should hope not indeed. When you have proper food for a time, then you will have your dreams again, beautiful dreams. And when you are out of here you will not need to dream, am I right?' And he wagged his fat finger roguishly.

Corporal McAllister bumped alongside.

'Mr. Maclaren,' he said pleadingly. 'Wull ye no' give a recitation?'

'I can't. I don't know anything.'

'Do ye no'? And this officer? Wull ye no' give us something of Robby Burns, sir, just to show the boys ye're Scots?'

'Me Scottish?'

'Are ye no'?'

'I'm a Jew from Jerusalem,' Marcus said.

They were all singing something to the squeeze-box. Alan's head had begun to ache and the smoke was making his eyes smart. He went to the window, breathing the fresh air. He felt fine. The war would not last long and then all this prison would be forgotten.

If only the snow would go. It reminded him of that scene in the Josephine-strasse and Tug slowly falling, breaking, like a factory chimney. Streamers lay like dead snakes on the trampled surface of the snow and the scarfed sentry slouched in the doorway. Two figures were walking round. He recognized the padre and Jim Irving. Jim was looking at the ground as he walked; the padre's head was turned eagerly towards him, his features crinkled and smiling, persuading him. The padre was talking volubly. Alan felt a sudden distaste for this shrivelled young man. He denied life and then looked for consolations for denying it, and he tried with goodwill to get his hooks into unhappy men.

'Life,' said Alan to himself, 'Life, not death.'

'Excuse me, sir?'

Fisher was standing beside him.

'Nothing. I'm looking at the view.'

'Not much, is it? When do you think we'll be out?'

The drink fired Alan. 'I hope to God it'll be soon. Are you as sick of it as I am?'

'Shouldn't wonder. Enjoying the party?'

'Very much. I wish we could have more. I'd like to come up here more often.'

'The lads thought they'd put on a special show to-night, but you're welcome any time. That is, if it's not against your own rules, if you know what I mean. Some think it's wrong.'

'Yes, I know that.'

'We'll leave it to you, sir. You'd be welcome, as far as we're concerned. Fell's going to sing soon. Have you ever heard him? He's got a fine voice, but he's gone on crooning at present. I don't know what you think of crooning, but I can't stick it.'

THE CASTLE AGAIN

Mind you, I've nothing against jazz, but it's when they get that sugary tone in their voice that I . . . well, I want to throw something.'

They looked through the bars at the white carpeted yard and the two revolving figures, and both, without speaking, turned away. It was better to put that behind them. Cigarette smoke sidled up the garish orange wallpaper and Fell was rocking from side to side, his ping-pong eyes protruding terrifyingly.

'I hear you're coming to some of Captain Morshead's evenings,' Fisher said.

'Yes, are you one of the members?'

'Oh, I've been studying with him for a long time. He puts things very clearly. He's been very good to me, taking a lot of trouble. I'm looking forward to hearing your story about your last place. I was in one of those places myself for a bit.'

'What had you done?'

'Oh, it was after I was captured. The Jerries were suspicious of me.'

Alan noticed the parachute wings on his chest. For some reason he had always thought Fisher was captured at Dunkirk.

'Where was that?' he asked.

'Yugoslavia. That's where I was dropped.'

Strange, how that country seemed always to be cropping up. One chance after another turned him towards it. It gathered round itself something dreamlike and legendary, lying away in the south-east, behind those irradiated sparkling mountains. Ivan and Mischa had gone there. Tomavich had come from there and his eyes had danced when he spoke about it. And now Fisher . . .

'I wouldn't mind going back there,' he was saying. 'Very fine people. I'll tell you about it one day, if you've the time.'

Fell had begun to sing and the room was silent a moment.

'No bloody crooning,' called out Gibson.

'Och, leave him alone. Let him sing what he wants.'

The crooning was not a great success, because Fell was far gone now with the drink. At the end Fisher said to Alan:

'I'd best put him to bed. There'll be trouble otherwise.'

When he came back he said: 'They say you're off for an x-ray in a day or two. I was wondering if you'd take a message for me. That's if it's not inconvenient.'

'What sort of a message?'

'It's like this.' Fisher had an extraordinarily soft voice, soft and clear, and he spoke carefully, sometimes using a rather stilted phrase learnt perhaps from the newspapers or from business letters. 'I've got a girl down in the village. She's one of those Ukrainian girls you hear singing up at the windows in the summer, and she's working in the factory. We've not been out on fatigues lately and I don't think we will be soon, and I haven't been able to communicate. Rudi would take a note for me, but I thought maybe, as you were going that way . . . if you wouldn't mind the risk, like. . . .'

Alan was pleased to be asked and did the commission for Fisher on his way through Durheim a few days later. He had to get up before dawn. Fisher had given him the note the night before and it was not noticed during the usual search of his clothing. His guard was half-asleep and in the darkness he managed to find, without being seen, a hollow post which Fisher among others used as a letter-box. It was just short of the bridge, where a path turned off into the factory and the garden of the white house. Alan made an excuse to stop and slipped the note through.

The mill wheel was drumming its eternal note and lights already showed through chinks in the factory windows. It was bitterly cold and on the station the Germans stamped up and down, swinging their arms and looking half-frozen. This was the last journey outside Alan made until the end of the war.

The x-ray was done and the German doctor told him that there was nothing wrong with him. He got into a carriage with his guard the same afternoon and at once noticed a woman sitting in the corner opposite. A little girl sat beside her, like the little girl who had surprised them in their hide, like all the little German girls he ever saw, with blue saucer eyes and golden-

white pigtailed. All the time this little girl stared at him gravely, as if he was someone out of a fairy story. She was the child from the white house and the woman was her mother, the younger of the two whom he saw from the castle windows. The mother looked scarcely more than twenty. She had the wonderful soft golden-brown skin of the country people, glowing, almost electric. She had no hat and her dark brown hair fell straight to her shoulders, worn in the page-boy style. Her slow voice when she spoke to the child set up a commotion inside him. He shifted and crossed his legs. The jolting of the train against his spine made it worse for him. He wished to be sitting back somewhere comfortably, with hours to spare, so that he could look at her and touch her.

He tried to imagine that this was so. He tried to forget the dumb-faced guard munching a crust opposite him, and the castle; and all the things he was going to study in the castle became futile and had no more point. The political chatter of Morshead and Tomavich was tedious. The war was ephemeral. On all the battlefields the soldiers were thinking of love, dreaming of love as they slept beside their tanks and in their lorries, while the winter's moon shone through the leafless trees. The struggle was less than the prize for which it was being fought. However vast the battles might now seem, the desire that came over him now was greater. She had no make-up. Her eyes were wide and friendly and deep blue, as the child's were wide and innocent and clear blue. She looked out of the window at the white fields, thinking inaccessible thoughts, and the pain grew until he thought he could not return to the castle and wanted to escape there and then. A movement of hers brought him back and he realized that he had been staring at her for several minutes. They both got out at Durham station and he looked back at her, envying her husband and wondering where he was. Her eyes were on him with curiosity and without hostility. He thought of her often afterwards and looked out of his high window, hoping to see her. He was too remote and he could hardly remember what she was like, after a day or two. He was cooped

YES, FAREWELL

up, not in touch, and so she could not be much more than a symbol. He seldom saw her. It was cold and he supposed she spent most of the time indoors with her children. She was one of the jewels that people bury during a war, hoping to come back to them when the war is over. She made him aware that he was growing older. Twenty-six now, twenty-seven in October next. He understood now some verses he used to repeat when he was a boy, standing bored in front of a bored schoolmaster:

Had we but world enough and time
This coyness, lady, were no crime. . . .

It had seemed silly then, sentimental, but he understood it now. The years were passing, he could almost hear them, and he felt something of that despair, light-hearted in spite of itself. . . .

But at my back I always hear
Time's wingéd chariot hurrying near. . . .

Those were the great lines, tolling outwards from an everlasting tower, and sooner or later making their shuddering impact on every heart as it became aware of time and death. He heard them now, at that time of the year, in his prison. They might have been written in the castle and inscribed there on the walls.

The snow continued, but the sun shone now intermittently. Early in February came an abortive thaw, and then a frost that stiffened the trampled snow into a dirty crust. Clean drifts which the soldiers had swept stood crisp and unmelted against the walls, under the icicles, for many days. It was difficult to walk in hard-soled shoes. On top of this followed another unexpected fall, like a second winter, covering the grey frozen snow of January. The enclosed little yard turned into one of those toy glass balls which children shake to reproduce a snow-storm. The prisoners ran across it, leaving a diagonal track instead of the square track round the sides where they usually walked. A slow blizzard of whirling flakes almost hid the opposite wall. The March winds blew in mid-February and towards the end of the month Alan woke up one morning and

THE CASTLE AGAIN

knew that spring had begun. The air was suddenly mild, the sky soft blue, the wind from the west. The whiteness retreated patchily from the fields and soggy dark streaks of earth appeared. The river rose and flooded its banks in the next two days. Everything seemed to be light in motion and light brown in colour. There were sudden defiant tones in the silver birches and the long dark line of firs across the horizon was always there, but everywhere was that shifting brown, everywhere were radiations, strengthenings and softenings of that one colour, like a young deer, of the early spring.

The prisoners thought how the country would be looking in their own homes and turned back sadly, angrily, to the dusty cobwebby rooms and their dead life. When would it be over? The question was asked more than ever now. They spoke of the invasion as a kind of revelation to come and believed that a few days after it had been launched they would be free. Surely they could expect it in the early spring. The tides would be less dangerous. The mud would not be too thick for modern vehicles. They studied the phases of the moon and began to lay bets on days instead of years, as it had once been.

Alan's mother wrote to him: 'The first primroses and the violets are out in Blaithwaite woods. It is so hard to believe that a war is going on. I work quite hard on all my committees, but sometimes I wake up and look out of the window and cannot understand that all these terrible things are happening. It seems like a nightmare. And you have been away nearly four years now.' He sat with the words blurred in front of him, thinking of the flooded torrents, and the slippery rocks, and brilliant impetuous shafts of sun across the lakes. This was the time that he liked to get up early and go walking before breakfast, meeting the farmers and the farmers' wives he had known for many years. Good morning. Good morning. The postman came past on his bicycle. Somebody shook out a mat against a little stone cottage. Good morning, beautiful morning, isn't it?

Mrs. Maclaren had worried much less about his escape than he had expected and he guessed that something had happened

to distract her. She wrote about his safety almost casually . . . 'Germany is not the place for a holiday it was in my day, so I hope you will take care of yourself. It is possible that you will never get this letter and we shall be talking together instead. Think of that! And I may have quite exciting news for you.'

It did not take him long to guess. She could only mean that she was going to get married again. She had been alone for a long while and she must have realized, from common sense and the altering tone of his own letters, that he would be different when he came back. The apron-string years were hopelessly gone. During that bad time in the Josephine-strasse he had thought of home as a peaceful haven where she and he could seclude themselves; but the shrinking from the world and from events had passed. Adolescence was passing. He had developed so late, he had lived so sheltered a life, but soon he would have had to leave her. He had known this, and wanted to do something, he could not think what, that would make old age less cruel and less lonely for her. Now she had thought of something herself; he was certain his guess was right and wondered who his stepfather would be.

So the spring weather had caught both the Maclarens, the mother alone in her house, the son never able to be alone in his prison. He woke up now with the love-pangs. He was recuperating from the Josephine-strasse, and when these pangs began he knew that he was coming alive again. His life stirred slowly, like a lizard in the sun, and the powerful dreams began again. His sexual imagination flowed at night. It was the river flowing under the city of his waking life, and though its insistence was painful he was glad of it.

He knew that he must work. There was really no other outlet. Masturbation was not an outlet. It gave a little relief and sometimes it was necessary, but he could not always be turning in upon himself. It took away energy unproductively, sapping the strength of the mind and doping the prisoners who surrendered to it. In his dreams he was relaxed and released, but dissatisfaction followed. He dreamt of the Polish woman Tug

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had gone to in the barn. He dreamt one night, so violently that even in the dream he was shocked, of the young woman who lived in the white house. When he awoke he was sweating and his pyjamas stuck to him. The dawn was breaking beyond the bars, and he saw the others huddled or stretched out in their bunks. On the floor were the stubs of many cigarettes smoked to help them to sleep. The room was terribly bare, terribly ugly. Nothing was neat or comfortable or soft or yielding, and he wished that he could dream again and go on dreaming until the war ended. But he could not. He was growing soft himself, thinking such thoughts. I must work, he murmured to himself, yes, to-day I must begin to work.

V

So he began to work, and to a schedule. He read the books that Tomavich and Morshead had recommended to him. There was no quiet place, but gradually he learnt to detach himself, especially when he was reading history. With economics it was more difficult, and at first he found it a job to concentrate. History he enjoyed. He liked to visualize the centuries flowing like a conveyor belt through a panorama of obscure and permanent forces. The great men sprang forward, brilliant and compelling. He tried to see them in perspective. They were not miraculous heroes who appeared unaccountably. The past fermented and great men became inevitable. A force inside themselves met the force of events and the spark was struck.

'You've become very studious all of a sudden,' said Simon. 'Have you got the exam fever? What are you reading?'

'History. Biographies.'

'Really. I love biographies. I have just been sent the *most* delightful book. It's about Lady Caroline Lamb. You know, the one Byron was crazy about. You must read it, Alan. It's simply enchanting.'

Simon knew all the small talk of dramatic periods. He talked

about Mary Queen of Scots, Rasputin, Ludwig of Bavaria, as if they were still alive and intimate friends of his, putting on his confidential air and dropping his voice to a whisper. . . .

'You know what they say about Marie Antoinette . . . I wonder . . . I've always thought her so attractive. . . .'

He knew the names of the Prince Regent's mistresses and would have liked to live under the Regency.

'I adore the whole idea, don't you? Bath, I mean, and Brighton, and everyone so witty and well dressed. . . . Have you read *Regency Merry-go-round*? . . . You must, Alan, if you're really keen on historical books . . . I'll lend it to you.'

And he lent it to him. Simon loved memoirs, diaries, scandalous private journals. History was a gigantic gossip column. He saw the spray and not the sea. Alan was for the sea, the tides and currents.

The impulses which make history were in himself. Now he was moving into touch. He had seen persecution. He had desired freedom. Tyrannies had been overthrown by hunger; now he had been hungry himself. In Tomavich there had been an intellectual love of liberty raised to a physical passion, physical because he had fought for it. This passion and sense of wrong at certain moments link those who feel them to men and women who are bitter, or starving, or jealous, or bored, or resentful of inefficiency, and together in one tide sweep vast regions; these certain moments, when people feel hemmed in, and there is a general claustrophobia, are often moments of explosion, resurrection, and greatness. In the castle he knew what it meant to be hemmed in and could feel in his own pulse the beating of a whole age.

He gave a talk, at Ford's request, about his impressions of the Josephine-strasse. He took several days preparing what he would say; he had never spoken in public before and did not much like the idea. He was given an hour after dinner one Sunday. Although he had written it all out and gone over it by himself in the silence-room at night, he was nervous throughout the morning. Waiting in his room in the turret, he found himself

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thinking of Tug and felt lonely and emotional. When he started off, the audience seemed to be hostile; he knew that this was not so, and that the suspicion was in himself, but he needed several minutes to shake it off.

He gave them an objective account of the prison, but all the time he wanted to say more. He wanted to bring before their eyes a living picture of Tomavich and Eulenstein and Stromers and the rest, and the other prisons Tomavich had told him of, worse than the Josephine-strasse. He wanted to say, things are not as we imagine them to be either in this castle or at home. We cannot blind ourselves to the suffering in the world.

The words he was looking for would not come. He presented a factual account of what he had seen, and thought it must be rather flat. But it seemed to have an effect.

'Too awful,' said Simon. 'That Count Eulenstein . . . I'm sure I've heard of him somewhere. Do you think there's any chance of his coming here?'

'Not much,' said Alan.

Simon shook his head. 'Simply frightful.'

Jim Irving did not even go to the talk. His apathy annoyed Alan; in the past he and Tug would have been the ones to respond most. He seemed to have lost his power to react. He had even grown tired of the padre, and now he did nothing at all.

Bill Franklin was unusually silent. The talk had put him into one of those bewildered moods, when he gave up the attempt to understand anything, and took refuge in remembering the things he knew.

'Terrible,' he said. 'Makes you wonder what's become of the world. Makes you thank your stars you're British. Christ, what a continent.'

Harry Ferguson noticed that Alan had changed in some way.

'Why didn't you let yourself go?' he said, his eyes twinkling. He wore a thick brown woolly sweater and looked like a Kola bear. There was nothing deep or disturbed about him. He still received pages of letters from his wife, whenever Lissow would

release them. It was he who had packed up Tug's belongings and written the first letter to Tug's mother.

'What d'you mean?' Alan asked.

'You didn't say everything you wanted to say, did you?'

'Not everything.'

'Don't be so scared. I'll tell you what's wrong with you.'

'All right.'

'What you want is a woman. Someone to bring you out. You're better than you used to be, but you're still a clod. Half awake.'

'Well, you produce one.'

'After the war I will. I think I shall write to Mary and tell her to look round for someone.'

Two evenings a week Alan went to Morshead's discussions. They took place in a small room on the yard level of the castle, and through the window, which faced inwards, they could see the sentry on patrol. The room was lent by the doctor. It was much in demand, being the only place where people could meet privately, or work without being disturbed. About fifteen men usually attended; half a dozen of them soldiers, and the rest officers. Sometimes a Frenchman or a Czech or an American was there. They talked about communism and socialism and the brave new world.

Alan enjoyed these evenings; they were lively and the time passed quickly. Morshead kept them to a point; that was his speciality. He disliked frivolous digression. He spoke chiefly for the soldiers, never using difficult words and sensing where a point had not been taken. Like a convoy, he went at the speed of the slowest.

His analysis was chiefly economic. He put England under a microscope, dissecting pitilessly, smashing the rose-coloured spectacles. He did not revile and he did not satirize. He subdued any personal bitterness. He took but did not tear England to pieces. He pronounced a general theme and produced little jarring illustrations; for example, the prisoners thought they were badly fed, yet in calories they were better off than one

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tenth of the population of one British city and one quarter of the population of another. The soldiers filled in his picture from their own experience.

Fisher was there every evening. He was amazingly quick. He made Alan feel like a bumpkin. Morshead would explain something, like a theory of the trade cycle, or the Russian five-year plans; and while Alan's thought-gears slipped and fumbled, Fisher went straight in like synchromesh. He was a Londoner. Fell followed him mutely. Fell never said much, but shook his head to show that he agreed. He was always chewing gum. There was also a Welsh soldier called Evans. It was not his real name and he had been in two prisons at home for stealing. He had been called up when the war started and captured in Greece; for six months he had worked in the mines of Southern Silesia. He had black curly hair, a cleft chin and a pointed nose. He was medium size, but powerfully built. On *appel* he stood with his thumbs dug into the tops of his trousers, pushing them down below his stomach, which bulged over them in a roll of muscle. Alan had noticed him, staring contemptuously at Germans and officers alike. Often he interrupted Morshead in a warm indignant voice, treating everyone in the room and outside it as an enemy.

At times Alan became bored with what Morshead was saying, and his eyes wandered to the audience. He liked to watch the alert listening faces of the soldiers and to hear their strong dialects. There was something positive and assertive about their voices; after them the voices of Simon, Bill, Geoffrey Larkin, seemed to be petulant, flat, or apologetic. McAllister had his Glasgow accent, dropping half the consonants, especially in the middle of a word . . . be'er for better, qua'er for quarter. The Welsh voices seemed to vibrate and to come from sources of great power. The Northumbrian sounded rapid and excited. Fell was a real Geordie. He was big and had a large aggressive jaw. His chest and arms were thickly tattooed with Union Jacks, snakes, portraits of girls, and a tombstone in memory of his mother.

'Are you cutting adrift from the world?' Geoffrey Larkin asked Alan. 'We don't see you much now. Have you become one of those people who have seen a great light? Jim Irving is enough for one mess, surely.' He spoke, as usual, with a tinge of sarcasm. He was bored with himself. He drew and sketched, day after day, but the inspiration did not flow, and really he would have been glad to see some kind of a light himself. He planned everything he said; whenever he opened his mouth Alan felt that print was coming out. He went on writing observant witty letters to the intelligent girl, and observant witty answers came pouring back. He gave his friends drawings and sketches of drawings to criticize, and suddenly took them back, saying that he was developing a new manner. He pecked at his brain like a canary at groundsel.

'They say you've taken to hobnobbing with the orderlies,' he said to Alan. 'I suppose you're cultivating the common touch. The people are so delightfully simple, aren't they?'

'You should come yourself.'

'Oh, I've been through that phase. Don't let me disillusion you. You're probably finding it very refreshing. I shan't be surprised if you go to dockers' pubs after the war and play darts with the workers. It's all a part of that stage.' He smiled paternally. 'Of course, you may turn Christian. Jim is just about to emerge from that. You might soon be passing into it. Yes, I should think that muscular Christianity is quite a likely line for you. You're a mountaineer, aren't you?'

'I used to climb at home.'

'It all fits in. The sense of achievement, of being at one with everything... don't let me put you off, though. It's all very refreshing while it lasts. They say you've taken up communism.'

'I'm interested.'

'You're a friend of Morshead's, aren't you?'

'Yes.'

'Do you go to these discussions of his?'

'Yes.'

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'As a matter of fact, I did think of coming myself. But everyone's taking up communism now. It's no longer new.'

'Did Morshead ask you?' Alan said.

'Ask me? How d'you mean?'

'Did he invite you to come?'

Larkin was nettled, 'I should come if I wanted,' he said tartly. 'As it happens I'm busy. I've got a lot to finish. So you're interested in communism? . . . Well, well, well . . . Of course,' he said with knowing friendliness, 'Russian communism is terribly out of date now. Nobody in London who knows anything takes it seriously. It was the fashion before the war. But it's quite clear from my letters that the cult has gone out completely. Still, it gives you something to do.'

Alan saw less of his mess now, except at meals. He preferred, for company, Marcus and Morshead and the soldiers. He even lost interest in the news. But in the late spring the American air force began to appear above the castle. He had often seen the raids at night, flashing on the skyline, but this was something bigger. The alarm had gone one afternoon, and he was waiting with a little crowd in the yard for the planes, when he saw the sentry looking at him. He recognized Rudi, whom he had not spoken to since he came back from Munich. Rudi made several cautious turns of the court-yard, like an aeroplane about to land, and alighted on Alan. He did not speak direct, but over his shoulder, facing towards the entrance.

'Where have you been?' Alan asked him.

'In hospital,' Rudi said.

'How did you manage that?'

'They say I'm ill.'

In spite of the warmer weather he still wore his long, ill-fitting greatcoat and a scarf round his neck, and his cough was no better.

'So you escaped?' he said to Alan, grinning. 'Through our window, too. A nice row there was.'

'What happened?'

'The *feldwebel* got sent to the front. You did us a bad turn there. He wasn't a bad fellow. How far did you get?'

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'Within sight of the frontier.'

'That was good. It's not easy now. They're keeping a much closer watch. Things are getting tighter than ever. Why don't you hurry up with your invasion?'

'Only another few weeks.'

'You always say that. I don't believe it's ever coming.'

Rudi took a few more turns for appearance's sake. He looked very unsoldierly and more like someone from the towns than from the country. His face was pale, and his eyes shone with fever. He spoke rapidly, in the slurred Saxon accent, which sounded as if his mouth was full of spittle. Alan did not understand more than half of what he said.

'Don't you want to finish it quickly?' he went on. 'I'm sick of it. They didn't do me any good in hospital. How long do your people think it'll last?'

'Varies. Not long anyhow.'

'It's stupid.'

He repeated all his old grievances and added the new one.

'Everything'll be destroyed,' he said. 'I was in one of the raids. My wife is in Dresden.'

'So you're married now?'

'Yes, I'm married. What's the use? I never see her.'

'Can't you bring her here?'

'No, it's forbidden. She has to stay on munition work in Dresden. She's going to have a baby too. People say the air raids will get worse. Is that true?'

'I shouldn't wonder, if you don't give in.'

'What can *we* do?'

It was the same old retort.

The German newspapers published a great deal now about the raids. The cartoons showed President Roosevelt dressed as the Statue of Liberty, holding an olive branch in one hand and a bomb in the other, while a squad of gangsters clambered into a plane behind him. Britannia was represented as a scrawny governess giving a lecture on morality; in the background, Mr.

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Churchill, clutching a wine-glass, grinned over the severed limbs of German children.

High up the bombers appeared, above the steeple of the belfry, above the jagged roof, high up in the clear blue sky, with fighters springbokking round them. As soon as the low hum began the prisoners rushed to the windows and into the yard, shading their eyes and counting excitedly, '... there they are ... look ... above the spire ... eight, twelve, fifteen ... scores of them ... see them? Christ, there must be hundreds.' Peter Wade always knew how many there had been, where they were going and where they were coming from, and what kind they were. The sentries put on steel helmets and machine guns were mounted on the look-out towers, and soon, not far off, they heard crump, crump, crump, and the castle windows began to shake.'

So, for the second time, the war was brought home to him. The first time had been in Norway, and then it had been defeat. He had missed the years of transformation. Now he saw the result and understood the might of the Alliance to which he belonged. The armadas overhead were so serene. The white puffs of flak in the blue sky were like an archipelago, and the planes sailed between, stately and deliberate, never seeming to change speed or lose formation. They had a victory mood which was quite strange to him. New prisoners who came to the castle from the fighting in Italy had it too. They were different from the prisoners of Dunkirk and Norway. Their brown cheerful faces showed up, and their voices were cheerful and animated. They had none of the older prisoners' desiccated cynicism. One of them was a year younger than himself, fifteen years younger than Ford, and yet a colonel. Alan would be twenty-seven at least when he got home, and still a lieutenant.

But since he had met Tomavich, and begun to work himself, he no longer felt jealous of these new prisoners. They had had no time to think about peace, no time to think out what they had really been fighting for. The war had taken all their energy. He did not mind now, hearing them talk about the world from

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which he had been excluded. He felt sorry for the professional soldiers, because prison had really damaged their prospects. They were used to it and seldom talked about it, but now and then a remark gave away their bitterness. A man like Ford might have made a big name for himself in the Army. He could have organized anything. He had imagination, and even in the castle he always found something to keep him busy. Even now, when nobody was interested in escaping, he had created employment for himself.

VI

MAJOR FORD was preparing a secret organization in the village. It was to be composed of Germans who had made contact with the British in the castle and would take over local administration at the end of the war, on behalf of the Allies. Nobody was supposed to know about this; and although the prisoners lived on top of each other, very few did know. Alan found out through Fisher.

Alan saw a good deal of Fisher now. Sometimes he went over to the soldiers' quarters, which was supposed to be against the British and German regulations, and stayed there talking. Fisher shared a room with Fell and Evans and two other Welshmen; all of them attended Morshead's discussions, and they liked to talk them over, afterwards, when Morshead was not there, in their own words. The discussions were too impersonal for them; they went on, or let Morshead go on about what was to happen to industry and banking and foreign policy, and lost sight of individual lives. Alan wondered what people were really out for and what they missed; by talking with the soldiers in their own rooms, he understood better.

At first they were reserved and correct. They always called him 'sir' and made sure that he had a chair, and listened to anything he said with traditional respect. He in turn was not at his ease at first; he made a point of seeing he had cigarettes to offer

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them, and avoided asking them personal questions. Conversation rapidly became easier. They talked about their homes and their experiences in the war and their ambitions for the future.

Fisher was working for Ford in the village. The soldiers were the only prisoners ever allowed outside the castle regularly, and Fisher had a girl friend.

'She's a German,' he said. 'She works in a shop on the other side of the river.'

'I thought she was Ukrainian,' said Alan.

'Oh, that one. -She's different. Besides, she's Fell's now.'

The German girl had fallen in love with Fisher. She found out from the guards whenever the British soldiers were coming into the village, and was always there in the street when they went past. They had first noticed her about a year ago. One day she brought some bread and gave it to Fisher when the guard's back was turned.

'I wasn't going to refuse it,' he said. 'And you know how it is. One thing led to another.'

'What did it lead to?'

'She fixed with the guards to let us talk. We couldn't go off on our own, of course, but we used to get a bit of time together, talking. It was a shade awkward. She said she was nuts on me. She said she could fix for me to escape.'

'Why didn't you?'

'It wouldn't have been exactly an escape. She wanted me to stay with her on one of the farms, see. Mind you, some of the boys have done that, but I didn't like the idea myself. Besides, she didn't mean much to me. I was sorry for her, if you know what I mean.'

'She was taking a pretty big risk.'

'She didn't seem to mind that. She couldn't stand the nazis. Couldn't stand them. Her old man was one, too. She had plenty of courage. She didn't seem to mind what she did. Well, in the end, we got stopped going into the village for a bit, and she started to send me notes.'

'Here, into the castle?'

'Yes. One of the *Posten* used to bring them.'

'Rudi, I bet.'

'Yes, it was Rudi.'

'What did you give him for it?'

'Oh, cigarettes. Chocolate sometimes. Mind you, I didn't want the notes much. They were rather embarrassing, as a matter of fact. I used to burn them. She only knew a bit of English, and she took the love words out of the dictionary. Still, I'd have liked to have kept one or two of them. I didn't want the risk for her, in case of a search. Well, a few weeks ago I mentioned to one of the officers that I had a friend down in the village, like, and I reckoned he must have told Major Ford, because Major Ford sent for me and told me he wanted me to help him. So I asked what he wanted me to do, and he said, would this Elsa be willing to do intelligence work for us? I said I'd ask her. I didn't think she would myself, but when I asked her she didn't think twice about it. So that's how it began.'

Every week Elsa sent information in to Major Ford. Rudi was the chief go-between, for which he got payment in cigarettes, chocolate and clothing. The girl asked for nothing. She told Fisher she did it because of him and because she hated the nazis. Her information was detailed and accurate. Through her father's friendship with an official in the local *Kreisleiter's* office she was able to trace a large chart showing, in miniature, the way nazi Germany was run. Durheim was a microcosm; they learnt from her the terraces of administration, the relation between party and state, the interlocking of the police and secret police. She told them the names of the local commanders, as far as Dresden and Leipzig. She turned the village, where she had been born, lived, and worked, into a stage, on which they knew the chief actors intimately without ever speaking to them.

Fisher took Alan one day to a window of the theatre, overlooking the town.

'Just watch the bridge,' he said.

'I don't see anything unusual.'

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Occasionally a cart went across. He saw women in black, and children, and an official in a brown shirt. The weir was to the left, and the water slid over it and under the bridge. The mill wheel rustled just below. A train diew in at the station, and for a few minutes the bridge was speckled with black dots of people. A little girl and boy were playing on the lawn of the white house. The crowds from the train dissolved into streets out of sight, and once again the bridge was quiet.

'Look at the far end,' Fisher said.

A girl in a white sweater appeared from the other side. She glanced for a moment at the castle, but Alan could not see her face. At a window further along he saw Major Ford. He was standing back a little, holding a telescope made by one of the prisoners. He raised it to his eye, and, resting it on the bars, focused it on the girl. Her movements seemed to be distraught and pointless. First she walked across the road and looked at the weir. Then she came along the pavement, crossed back again, and leant for a few minutes on the parapet, gazing at the white house. Then she walked back and disappeared the way she had come. Ford lowered the telescope and turned away from the window.

'Nothing new,' said Fisher.

Alan asked. 'What does it mean?'

'I think they're practising signals. I don't know what they all mean myself. Major Ford's working something out. I know, when she walks like that, there's nothing new to report. Quite neat, isn't it? Might turn out useful one of these days.'

'Lisow would like to know about that,' said Alan.

Fisher laughed. 'I'll say he would.'

'She'd be shot if they found out.'

'I reckon she would.'

'You ought to marry her.'

'It wouldn't be a bad idea,' said Fisher. 'I like someone with a bit of independence. You can't say she hasn't got that.'

They stayed at the window and Fisher explained about the people in the village. According to Elsa most of them realized

the war was lost, but the nazis were as fanatical as ever, and nobody dared say a word. There was talk of some new secret weapon and rumours of a large area having been sealed off for experiment and research. The bombing had upset them, but so far it had not broken them. The shelters were deep and well fortified, and people trooped into them as soon as the sirens went. The small businessmen in the village were against the nazis now, and at a given moment, when they could be sure the danger was past, they would be willing to give the British assistance. The local nazis had done very well for themselves and the *Kreisleiter* had got himself quite a big estate. They were disliked, less because of their ideas or their behaviour, than because they had special rations and never seemed to be short of petrol. The manager of the factory was living with the wife of the mayor. The Commandant had charge of the local troops for a radius of five miles, as well as the guards of the castle. Lissow was generally disliked, and the story that he was at daggers drawn with the Commandant was quite true. There had lately been a row about Treidfeld. A girl in the village was going to have a baby by him, and his wife had found out, and come the whole way from Berlin to give him a piece of her mind.

Round to the left, about four kilometres away, Elsa informed them, there was a small concentration camp for European Jews. She had never been there herself, as it was thickly wired off; but one of the guards was her friend, and he had told her that things were very bad there and people dying in dozens. The townsfolk were afraid that, when the Allies approached Durham, the foreign workers would rise and take their revenge. Everyone was scared stiff of the Russians. Many listened to the Allied broadcasts, hoping to hear something about the plans for the occupation of Germany. If Durham was going to be in the Russian zone, then those who could afford it would start making arrangements to leave. If it was going to be in the American or British zone, then they hoped to be treated leniently.

'Who lives in the white house?' Alan asked.

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'People by the name of Bohle. There's an old lady, I expect you've seen her, and her daughter-in-law. . . .'

'I've seen her,' Alan said.

'Not bad, is she?'

'Not bad at all.'

'Well, there are those two, and a couple of kids. The husband's at the *Ostfront*.'

They sat on the window-sill, staring over the village to the hills and the dark forests, behind which the sun sank.

'Yes,' said Fisher. 'Major Ford's getting a whole new set-up ready, and he's got pots of energy. I'm not sure that I agree with his ideas, but he's got more idea of what's going on than most people here.'

'What don't you agree with?' Alan asked.

'He's getting in touch with all these types who call themselves anti-nazis. If you ask me, they were as nazi as you like when everything was going well. The fellow who runs the factory, for example. I happen to know he's on Ford's list as the new mayor. I figure he's done pretty well out of the war, and he wouldn't have been left in charge of the factory if he hadn't been in with the nazis. Now they're losing, he wants it both ways.'

'Who else is going to run it? We haven't got enough trained people, nor have the Yanks, to take over every factory in Germany. What are you going to do?'

'Give it to me,' said Fisher, half seriously. 'I'm not trained, but I reckon I could take it on.'

'Would you like to?'

'Wouldn't mind. If things are the same in England as they were before the war, I shan't get much of a chance there.'

He paused. Alan knew that there was something he wanted to say, but he had remembered that Alan was an officer.

'Do you think there's been much of a change?' he asked.

'I don't know,' Alan answered. 'I've been away too long.'

'Yes, we're out of it all right. All the same, prison has been an experience. I've learnt a lot I'd never have learnt before, and seen a lot. I've done a bit of reading too.'

‘Were you in a stalag?’ Alan asked.

‘I was on working parties most of the time. In the mines, for a bit. And then we were at Siemenstadt, just outside Berlin. I was on a farm in Poland for a couple of months. I know I wouldn’t want to do it again, but it was interesting.’

‘I wish we could have got out,’ said Alan. ‘Cooped up the whole bloody time.’

‘If you don’t mind me saying so, it might have done some of the officers a lot of good to see what life was like outside. It’s not their fault, of course. It’s just the Geneva Convention, isn’t it, that they aren’t allowed to work. It’s different with the Russkys. The Jerries herd them all together, officers and men.’

‘Would you like to get out of this place?’ Alan asked.

‘Not yet,’ said Fisher. ‘I’ve not been here long. Besides, it’s interesting. Seeing everyone close to. You don’t get a chance like this normally.’

‘Seeing the officers, you mean?’

‘Yes.’

‘Well, what d’you think of them?’ Alan asked.

‘Do you really want to know?’ asked Fisher.

‘Sounds bad.’

‘No, it isn’t bad. Individually I admire a good many of them. As a class, I only admire them because they seem to stick together better than we do. It’s the inefficiency that’s struck me most.’

‘Inefficiency?’

‘Not as officers, I mean. I can’t say about Yugoslavia, because I was on my own there most of the time. But the officers were all right at Dunkirk. Those that I saw, anyhow.’

‘Was that your baptism of fire?’ asked Alan.

‘Baptism of fire! More like a total immersion. No, it’s not that I mean. Not military efficiency. It’s more about running the country in peace that they’re inefficient, if you see what I mean. You can see it here. They don’t seem to know what’s going on.’

‘We can’t know much. We never get outside.’

‘I mean, what’s going on at home and what was going on at

home before the war. There's only Mr. Morshead, and one or two others, and yourself now, who seem to take any interest. Mind you, I don't doubt they're all right at their own jobs. But it's when it comes to seeing the thing as a whole that they don't seem to me to have much idea. It's natural, I suppose. We all think of our own job first. Still, I used to think that public schools and all that produced a sort of super-type. Christ,' he said, chucking his head up, 'there are plenty here who have been to public schools, and they're not what I expected.'

'Why didn't you become an officer?' Alan asked.

'I could have. When I got back from Dunkirk I was going for a commission. Then I got the chance of this Yugoslav job. So I took that. We had to volunteer. We got a notice round the battalion. I reckon they weren't sorry to get rid of me. They knew I was a Red. I'd been a member of the Y.C.L. before the war. You know, pamphleteering and chalking things up on walls and all the rest of it. I liked the idea of Yugoslavia, because the papers said that Tito was a communist. Anyhow, it seemed something new.'

'What was it like?'

'Well, of course, a lot of them was just bandits. In some respects I suppose you'd say they was centuries behind us. Some of the finest people I've ever met, though. I'd give a lot to go back there.'

'Did you have much fighting?'

'Off and on. Short and sweet, most of it. Always on the move. I nearly got pinched when I was dropped. Landed in a bloody tree. I had to stay there all night. I didn't know if I was a hundred foot above ground or ten. I was dead scared. The partisans came and pulled me out in the morning.'

'How did you get on with them?'

'Well, as I said, they did me very well. Of course, they were suspicious at first. They didn't know whether to trust the English or not. Once they decided to trust you, there was nothing they wouldn't do for you. You could trust them too. Leave a packet of fags lying about and no one would swipe

them, even when they was short themselves. It was a bit different from this place.'

He turned his head. He had a singularly clear profile, with frank eyes. His expression, usually cheerful, had become reflective, and for a moment Alan remembered Tomavich. They sat in silence. The sun had vanished behind the forests, and the sky was white, with a primrose-coloured radiance above the sunset.

'What are you going to do after the war?' Alan said.

'Depends. Fell and me have got ideas. He's a bit slow, but he's a hard worker.'

'What sort of ideas?'

'I dunno yet. Have to see the lie of the land first. We thought of a laundry. Cash is the trouble. You've got to have the capital, with things as they are. Maybe it'll be like that for a long time.'

He told Alan how he was collecting the cash. He was certainly making the most of things. For several months, up in the rafters in the soldiers' quarters, he and Fell had been distilling hooch. They sold it to the officers and were keeping back several score of bottles to sell at a higher price later, after the invasion. They had made several hundred pounds already and they still had thirty-five bottles left.

'If the officers want it and are ready to pay for it,' Fisher said, 'what's to prevent me giving it to them? It's their funeral. I want the cash, and they want the drink.'

'What do you charge?'

'Four quid a bottle.'

'My God!'

'That's what they'll pay. It's supply and demand, isn't it? Ask Mr. Morshead.'

'How do you reconcile this with socialism and communism?'

'I don't,' said Fisher. 'I want to get started. Personally I wouldn't touch the stuff, not unless it was a bottle I'd made specially for myself. If I was an officer I wouldn't make it, and I certainly wouldn't sell it because I wouldn't need to.'

THE CASTLE AGAIN

'So it's inefficiency you're against?' Alan asked.

Fisher thought carefully before answering.

'It used to be,' he said, 'and it still is to a great extent. But I've got all sorts of new ideas since I've been in this castle, and since I've been in the shaft. Listening to the music concerts and the plays and all that, and doing a bit of reading. I'd like to have a library. Then I'd like to travel. I wouldn't even mind coming back to this country, once it's all over. As for Yugoslavia, I've always had a hankering for that, once I'd seen it. You don't get a chance to see half the things. Of course, most of the lads are just ready to settle down, as long as they can have a home and a pint, and that's enough for them. There's never more than half a dozen of us comes to Mr. Morshead's talks or takes an interest in things like that at all. I don't understand that attitude myself. I want to know things. I want to see life.'

'You've seen more of it in Germany than I have,' said Alan.

'I want to see more of it at home too.'

Alan responded to him. He could understand the sense of exclusion. Within reach lay a full, variegated, exciting world. Alan had missed it through comfort, Fisher through poverty. Alan, born to the charm of life, had now seen some of its hardness. Fisher knew about the hardness and had seen some of the charm. Both of them wanted to experience all that there was to experience. Alan was drawn to Fisher by the lack of sympathy which both of them felt for most of the officers in the castle, and for most of the soldiers, who didn't want to sink any new shafts. It was this ambition for change and growth and expansion that attracted Alan towards communism, as well as the emotional idea of brotherhood. He felt also, but not so strongly, the sense of injustice in the pre-war world; which made rebels of people like Evans. But this injustice had never made a powerful impact upon him. There were slums, and there had been unemployment, and many people at home lived in unhealthy houses and worked too hard and had too little to eat; but he had never lived among them or been subject to the same pressure. His wish to alter things came from discontent with

the meagreness of vision in his own world, which he knew and understood; Fisher called it inefficiency.

He noticed it especially when his friends were talking about Russia. They were so mean. Ever since the daytime air raids had begun they had had a very strong sense that the war was really coming to an end. They might be a few months out in their guesses, but sooner or later they really would be free. It was a question of who would liberate them; the Russians from the east, or the Americans and British from the west. About this time they began to feel a brief misgiving that the invasion would never happen, and that the war would be won by the Russians alone. An inferiority complex developed, most unusual among Englishmen. The French prisoners had had it in 1941 and 1942, because of their defeat. The Germans had it permanently. The Canadians and Australians had it still; a hangover from the colonial days. The English had only acquired it since America and Russia entered the war, and naturally all the other nations who had been infected before were delighted when they noticed it. The German press played on it with great dexterity, pointing out that England had become a second-class power. The French asked logical questions about the economic future of the British Isles, and said that France had no alternative but an alliance with either Russia or America or both. In certain moods the Dominions officers said that the Empire was bound to dissolve, since the real leadership and power among the English-speaking peoples had passed to the United States. All got their own back. It made the English slightly puzzled and uncomfortable.

Bill Franklin, particularly, was resentful of the Russian victories. He seemed to expect that all the victories should be British. If British prestige fell, then his own prestige fell with it; he treated the rise of Russia as if it were a personal affront. But the Welsh soldier Evans welcomed it. He liked to see Great Britain's nose put out of joint. British prestige meant little or nothing to him. It was all humbug. All he knew was that his father had been on the dole for three years and that his family

lived in a house with three rooms and a leaky roof. The faster the Russians advanced, and the more disturbed Bill and people like Bill were, the more jubilant Evans became; he was getting his revenge.

Colonel Anstruther returned to Schloss Durheim towards the end of May. Alan saw a commotion in the court-yard and a group of prisoners moving towards the gate, and there was the Colonel in the middle, back from a propaganda camp. He wore his coat with the angora collar and he looked much healthier than when he had left. He had been away nearly seven months. The visit to Budgronz, where he had been shown the mass graves, had taken three days. After that the Germans had taken him round the anti-Bolshevist museum near Berlin. He had spent the rest of the time at the propaganda camp; it was a place for prisoners the Germans thought to be favourably disposed to them. They lived a more civilized life there, with fewer guards and more walks and now and then trips to local beauty spots. Anstruther had only left it because it had been bombed by the R.A.F. He was in very good spirits, but he had a mixed reception. Peter Wade was for ostracizing him completely.

'Thank God the boys smashed the place up,' he said. 'I shouldn't have been sorry if Anstruther had been inside it.'

They talked about it at Morshead's next discussion. Everyone there agreed he ought not to have gone. Evans thought that he should be court martialled after the war. Fisher said to Alan:

'Seems to me he had a pretty comfortable time. It makes you think. I'd like to know what our lads in the Silesian mines would say about this.'

'He'll have been pumped full of anti-Russian dope,' Morshead said. 'You'll see. It'll come out, sooner or later. Not that it's anything new to him. It'll merely confirm everything he believed before.'

But Colonel Anstruther sensed the hostility of the castle. Whatever he had been told, whatever the opinions he had formed, he kept quiet, and soon he was reabsorbed into the monotony. This happened to every fresh arrival. People took

an intense interest in them for a few days and then they were dropped. The shine wore off; under the neutralizing influence of the castle they became faded and dull, like clothing whose colour comes out in the wash.

Everyone in Morshead's group wanted to be liberated by the Russians. They had seen the Russian prisoners and they wanted to see the Russian armies. Most of the other prisoners hoped it would be the British, or at least the Americans. They did not want to be disturbed; they wanted people and things to which they had been accustomed.

Russia was something new, and many of them did not like it for that reason alone. It might have been thought that they would have been glad of any change, anything fresh to talk about, even if the idea was disturbing to them. But really many of them could not make any fresh effort. Alan had a job himself, studying, until he got into the habit. Russia was unsettling. She challenged people and gave them a guilty conscience. She killed stone dead arguments against starting Utopian experiments and attempting the impossible. One look at what Russia had achieved since the revolution, and there were few or no excuses left.

It made people feel awkward. Because of this awkwardness the older prisoners, especially, used to belittle Russia. They said the experiment had been betrayed. At one moment there might have been enthusiasm and selflessness . . . It had gone now, they said. Now it was just imperialism and bureaucracy. They could not have much evidence, because in 1939 they had scarcely heard of Russia, and since being prisoners unbiased books had not been allowed them, and they had read nothing but the German papers. What they said they often said from their guilty conscience: if, after all that lofty talk about the freedom of the peoples and so on, the Russians had abandoned their ideals, then others did not have to bother too much about theirs. It just proved that human nature was all the same. Sad, but there it was.

As for the victories of the Red Army, of course they *were* very remarkable. But often the praise sounded rather grudging.

THE CASTLE AGAIN

Anstruther and Bill Franklin were walking round the yard one day. Alan heard Anstruther say:

'It's a damned good thing we sent that military mission to the Russians. I should think they found our advice useful.'

'I quite agree,' said Bill. 'I don't doubt their soldiers are very good fighters. That's what you'd expect. I should think their staff depended a lot on any tips we could give them. And, of course, they'd have been helpless without our supplies.'

'I believe the chief supplies have come from America.'

'Oh, probably. But they were our ships that carried them. Still, they've done a very fine job. I'm not saying they haven't.'

So much for the Russians. Alan had little patience for this talk. It seemed to him small and personal. If they were going to talk about the Russians, let them forget their personal grudge; let them take a little trouble to find out, and start with a fair mind.

When Alan thought about the Americans, he had the same kind of feeling the cultured Chinese are supposed to have had about the British commercial infiltration into Asia during the nineteenth century. He had read about it in a history book. 'You came to us,' one of the mandarins or philosophers had said, 'and you found an ancient delicately-poised civilization, and you brought your trade and your craving to make money, and you broke it up.' In some way, he felt the same about America and Europe. Nobody at that moment could contend that the civilization of Europe was delicately poised. It was savage and unbalanced. But 1944 would pass, and underneath, even if all the books were burnt and all the cathedrals and museums bombed and all the civilized men and women murdered, the centuries had established themselves. The standards of morality and art which they had implanted were alive and growing; capable of being transformed, impossible to uproot. He was part of this growth, and it was part of him. The French, the Germans, the English, and the rest of them had all poured something into it, enlarged it, refined it. And now the Americans were coming along, with their riches and their energy, like the British to China, and what

were they going to add: Refrigerators. Tinned food in innumerable varieties. Motor cars. Radio sets. What else?

It was part of the German propaganda to say that they would bring nothing else, and that what they did bring would debase and destroy all that had been built up. They said that Europe, by which they now meant Germany, was a civilization of the spirit, and that America was a materialist civilization, cynical and tasteless, vulgar, the bull in the china shop. Alan hoped that they had not taken him in. He did not think so. If it was possible to destroy European civilization, the Germans were the ones who were doing it; if Europe had a fine tradition, then the Germans were the ones who had betrayed it. All the same, something in him echoed when they struck this note. Europe had meant something in the lifetime of the creative spirit, and his own country had meant something to Europe. He stood back and asked himself what the United States were going to mean. The Germans played upon this reserve in him and in millions of others, trying to twist it into suspicion and active enmity.

He kept his balance. He thought of the castle as a lonely point rocked between many great forces. It was dramatically placed. It had been built in the heart of the old tradition. Fisher, with his contacts in the village, told him that there, under their feet, explosions were being prepared. In the warm afternoons Alan heard the harsh powerful songs of the enslaved Ukrainian girls, and along the valley was the concentration camp. Yes, there would be explosions there. And soon two young armies, like huge torrents, would be bearing down upon the castle, one from the east, one from the west, and the castle would stand at their confluence. He wished that they might arrive at the same moment. He often imagined them, pouring out of the hills and meeting down there on the bridge. And there the prisoners would be, with the volcanoes bursting, and the great tides joining, and the different powers and motives clashing all round it, and he himself watching. The prisoners might have some message, some conclusion to take home. They would have had time and

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opportunity to think it all out. People at home would be exhausted. The war would have dulled them. It could not fail to be so. But the prisoners might go back rejuvenated. They had learnt to watch and to absorb; they were at the maelstrom's calm, the ones who would be rested.

VII

LATE in May Lissow released a batch of mail. It was one of his favourite tricks, holding up the prisoners' letters, and then suddenly releasing them all at once, and expecting folk to be grateful to him. Alan had three. One told him that Brian Clyde had reached home by his old route through the Balkans to Constantinople. It was an astonishing journey, on his own the whole way, and most of it on foot. He had been decorated by the King and was now a major, back with his battalion.

Another letter came from Tug's mother. She asked Alan to tell her all he could about Tug's death. How had Tug been at the time? Had he suffered at all? Had he said anything or left any messages? 'We so much want to know everything that happened. We are such a long way away, and you were with him.' She wrote almost apologetically, afraid to impose herself on him. Half-way through she tried to send him news of the war, using one of those painstaking, needlessly involved codes with which parents wrote to their sons in prison. 'We have a great number of our cousins staying with us at present, our house is full to overflowing, and they are all longing to meet your hosts. We hope the meeting will be arranged very soon.' So she tried to tell him about the American armies and the coming invasion. And at the end, again: 'If you can, please tell us everything about Tug, even if you think it will be painful to us. It would mean so much. Don't use one of your letter-cards, but perhaps you could write what happened in one of your own letters home, and they will pass it on to us. We shall be so glad to see you when the war is over and you are back in

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England. Tug spoke of you often in his letters, and perhaps then you will be able to tell us personally.'

He opened the third letter and read it again. It was from his own mother and gave him the news he had expected.

'Dearest Alan,

'I am sending this off on your birthday and my present to you is a stepfather. We were married last week and now I am called Mrs. Walter Thurlow. He is *the* Thurlow, the one who owns the shipping lines at Barrow, and terribly rich, even in these days. I do hope you will like him. He is big and red-faced, and has rather a loud voice, but I shall have altered that by the time you get back. I think he may be rather hard, he has that reputation, but then in business you have to be, don't you? Really he is quite intelligent, with a leaning towards the arts, and he likes hearing me sing more than you did, and he is very happy. And so am I. We met last year. I was beginning to think I had been alone long enough. Do say you're pleased. He is longing to meet you and wants you to go into his business. I've told him all about you, of course, and said that you'll want to go your own way as soon as you get out of the army. I'm sure it won't be long now, dearest. Walter says the Germans are short of steel and all kinds of things they can't do without. Do write and give me your consent. . . .'

Alan smiled. So there it was. The rich man falling for the intelligent widow. The chance for the only son. And Barrow was quite near home, too; he saw his mother's skilful and subtle hand and he took off his hat to her. The company owned big yards. They sprawled spiderlike at the water's edge, the funnels of ships towering above rows of dingy huddled streets. Accident, accident. Events occurred, and he could do what he liked with them. He would take his time, thinking it out. He saw the chance and the conflict, the distraction and the object, and somehow, easily, he would reconcile them. He wrote home, congratulating his mother but saying nothing about the job. He would have to work that out.

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He guessed what Geoffrey Larkin would say. Ah, the machine will get you. Walter Thurlow, of Barrow-in-Furness. This is my stepson, Alan Maclaren, come to learn a bit about the business, haven't you, my boy? How do you do, how do you do? There he goes. The boss's stepson. Prisoner of war.

He wondered what Morshead would say. Take it, of course. Experience. Just what you want. He crossed the court-yard to tell Morshead. The room was empty. The birds were singing in the trees outside; the branches with their green fingers nearly touched the windows. The woodpecker was there, the woodpecker the prisoners knew as well as they knew one another; he tapped at the trunk of an elm, head down, drilling away with a definite, almost passionate knocking, so rapid that it seemed to be continuous. Alan sat down at the book-covered table, lit a cigarette and glanced at the titles. No novels, nothing light. Economics as usual. Keynes on this, Robertson on that, Cole on something else. He looked through the pile to see if there was anything on shipping and came on a large leather-covered volume, which he had opened before he remembered what it was. The pages were written in several different hands. It was Marcus's dream-book. Alan had a brief struggle with his conscience. After all, Marcus had never expressly forbidden him. There was no harm. He would tell nobody, except Marcus himself . . . perhaps. Keeping an eye and an ear on the door, he began to read.

There were about sixty entries, not a bad total out of three hundred Englishmen. Marcus must have made people expand. Each man had a separate page to himself. At the top was his name, then an account of his dreams, sometimes written by himself, sometimes by Marcus from dictation, and at the end was a signature, and notes by Marcus in shorthand. Most of the prisoners had taken the entries seriously and gone into great detail. A few had tried to be funny. Bill Franklin had contributed one remarkable dream. Alan remembered him telling them about it.

'Beat this if you can,' he had written. 'I had been playing

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a good deal of poker and the other night I dreamed about it. I dreamed I was dealt a royal straight flush, broken by a black jack. I went along to the boys next day and warned them what was going to happen. Sure enough, third time round, I picked it up. Ace, king, queen, ten of hearts, broken by the jack of spades. I made a hundred quid on it. If you can fix me up with any more dreams like that I'll give you a job.'

There were many obsessed dreams about escaping, and many sexual dreams, in which Tony Masterman played the chief part. There was a famous dream, which later became thought of as a miracle among the prisoners. In 1940 a captain in the Tank Corps called Alex Drew had dreamt that the invasion of Europe would take place on June 6. He didn't dream the year. He bet his mess that this date would be fulfilled. If he lost, each year he would make them a cake. If he won, they would each make him a cake. For three years he had lost. He had pinned his faith on 1944. Nothing would shake him. He was quite sure he had had a revelation.

Alan read through his own dreams. He found the fantasy about the castle taking to air, on which Jim had written his story, and the nightmares he had been through in the Josephine-strasse, after Tug's death. He found those dry neutral dreams he had had on his return, and then the latest spurts of the spring under his waking self which convalescence and better food had unsealed. He felt quite shocked when he read them and hoped that Marcus wasn't in the habit of leaving this book lying around.

Simon Dempster had had a whole series of dreams about famous women of the present day. 'I can't understand it,' he had written. 'I'm not in the least interested in them. I've got nothing against them, but I can't shake them off. Eleanor Roosevelt, Ella Maillart, Lady Oxford and Asquith, the Queen of Spain. What have I done to deserve it? Nothing happens. They just appear and look at me and go away.'

Idly Alan turned the pages. He reached the entry: Flight-Lieut. Jim Irving. Underneath, small and neat, were several

pages of Jim's handwriting. He read on, and forgot all about Mr. Walter Thurlow and his mother's letters and his plans for the future.

'I don't want you to interpret my dreams,' Jim had written. 'I can interpret them myself, and there is nothing to be done about them. They are nearly all sexual. They reflect and enlarge my life before I became a prisoner. It is as if I have to watch a distorted film of my own youth. I sleep badly, but now I prefer not sleeping at all to sleep with these dreams behind it.

'I have a vivid imagination. In 1940 my first dreams were of capture and escape. I lived the battles in which I had fought and it was not pleasant. The aeroplanes had faces, and seemed like dragons bearing down on me. I saw friends of mine, members of crews who had fought in the same squadrons and been killed, speechless with grey faces. There were men to whom I had given orders. In my dreams at that time I was obsessed with responsibility for their death. They appeared suddenly and watched me, with reproachful, accusing eyes. I wanted to escape, and later I dreamed of that. I was being chased along a narrow lane between steep, high warehouses, beating on the walls to find a way out, and my pursuers hurried closer and I could not get away. I feared that they were going to torture me. Many of us have had nightmares of this kind.

'I began to dream about women. At first I had thought about women in the daytime, like most of us, but almost frantically. The physical restraint was so great that sometimes I had to go away and write down the lusts that came into my head, as a kind of outlet. There was no one I could talk to. I had to do something, and I spent a good deal of time preparing to escape, and that made things better in the daytime. But the lusts came back, they came into my dreams at night. I couldn't have stopped them, even had I wished, and I didn't wish, because they were a kind of proof that I was still alive. Over the years that I have been a prisoner they have gone slowly but logically from one thing to another, from what is called excess to excess, ending naturally in perversion.'

Here Marcus had written in the margin: 'Compare experience of . . .' and the names of other prisoners followed.

Jim's record continued. 'All this is quite common among prisoners. The dreams are the result of being alone and inactive and of brooding. Our secret wishes flourish and drag their way to the surface. Many people, before they were prisoners, never imagined, had never heard of the acts they dreamed. I was not like that. What I dreamed corresponded very closely to my own life, and seemed to taunt me.

'They were a reflection of my own vain search for some kind of peace. I am not inexperienced or adolescent. I have known a number of women, and I have never found any real satisfaction. The dreams brought this home. I hadn't been aware before of what had happened, not clearly. The dreams made it clear. When I was younger I went from one person to another, and from one indulgence to another, and I never found the rest I wanted. After each came disillusion and dislike and boredom, but never tranquillity; never, except once, and she is dead.

'Prison brings things home to us. We all know that. It is our common experience. We grow up. It manifests itself in different ways. For me it has become manifest through dreams rather than through thought. Dreams often tell us the real truth, I reckon. They come unbidden and we can't deny them. Mine have brought it home to me that since I was very young I have been engaged on a kind of search and that the search is futile. In the last six months they have changed entirely. The sexual fulfilment comes no longer. I dream of nothing but deserts and desolate flat spaces, without a tree, without a human being, where I travel endlessly and arrive nowhere. I told you one of those dreams the night after you came to supper with us. It may not have sounded disturbing. I don't want your pity. But if you go on like that, night after night, and wake up to see the bars on the windows, and the shadows of the bars on the ceiling, a time approaches when you become worn out with it.

'The conclusion is being forced on me that my last dreams are an expression of universal life, and that there is no such thing

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as fulfilment or quiet and that it is waste of time looking for it, and yet look for it I must. Lately I have been dreaming of a shadow. It is a sort of monster. It walks behind me. I see warm blue seas, and hear the water on the shores, and come within reach of shining valleys, and suddenly the shadow rises like a cliff, so that I cannot pass.

'It follows me now into the daytime, crossing the frontier of my subterranean consciousness into my waking life. Transversely this prison, with which all of us are obsessed, has crossed into my dreams. I have had moments when a devil seemed to be shaking me and I woke up exhausted with a struggle I did not understand, which terrified me. The other night I seemed in my sleep to see the whole sky covered and criss-crossed with bars, and all the people in the world were beating at them and trying in vain to get clear. I don't know what has come over me. I was not like this a long while ago, but I can't recover what I was.'

The record tailed off there, as if he had grown tired of it.

Alan closed the book, wishing that he had never opened it. He had a deep sense of repugnance. All his own nightmares in the Josephine-strasse came surging back over him. He really hated the morbid and the tragic; he had had enough of it. It was unfair of Jim to talk in that way, unfair and wrong. The stage passed. It was something they all went through. It was not true that things stayed as he said.

But he couldn't dismiss it. He had had a guilty conscience about Jim, ever since last year, when they had tossed and Jim had lost the toss. He remembered that nightmare, when Jim had been howling like a wolf. He had always thought that it should have been Jim to escape, and himself to stay behind and study. The toss, the accident had brought it out wrong and they had given way to it. He had felt guilty ever since he had come back to the castle, because he had known well enough that Jim was not in his normal mind and needed helping. But it had been too much trouble. He had had his own work, and that had absorbed him and made the time pass easily. Many people are the same. They work away and they study them-

selves to a standstill for the benefit of mankind, and all the time people are suffering near them, and they don't see, or don't want to be bothered, blinded happily with their work.

He looked down into the court-yard. The bruised evening was lying on the uneven slate roof of the castle, and the first siren had sounded. The prisoners emerged from doorways and walked round, talking cheerfully, or stood in groups. The sky turned grey behind the chimneys. Jim came out alone and walked up and down the centre of the court-yard, repelling company. He moved to his usual corner, and stood there listlessly, his hands dug deep into the pockets of his R.A.F. jacket. The wicket in the entrance gate opened and Lissow came in with the Commandant. He limped forward, leaning on his ebony stick. The Commandant wore a wide green cloak thrown back from the shoulders; he wore it for effect, in all weathers. The sentries came to attention, and the last siren went. Alan fell in with the rest, preoccupied, wondering what he ought to say, and if there was anything he ought to do.

He spoke to Jim that night in the big silence-room. His effort at providing company was not very successful. There had been one of the gramophone concerts and when it was over he went and sat on a bench opposite Jim, at a table in the corner.

'You're very glum these days,' he said.

Jim didn't answer.

'You've been like this ever since I came back. It's a pretty long mood.'

'Is it?'

'Everyone's had them, except Harry, but this is a record. You're more of a clam than Brian used to be.'

He was making a clumsy effort to speak lightly; he could hear his own put-on accent.

'You're becoming a hermit yourself,' Jim said. 'You work all day.'

'Why don't you? It passes the time.'

'Is that why you do it? I thought you'd discovered a mission or something. Geoff was telling me about it.'

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'I shouldn't take Geoff too seriously.'

'I'm glad you've got something to do.'

He was sitting against the wall, his features in the dark. Alan wished he had asked Fisher for a bottle of hooch. It would have done them both good.

'What d'you do all day, Jim?'

'Nothing. There is nothing.'

'Can't you write some stories? Like that story you wrote about my dream.'

'Have you had any more like that?'

'Not lately.'

'I'd like to have dreams like that,' said Jim.

'D'you dream much?'

'Sometimes.'

He closed up. Alan could not bring himself to say that he had seen Marcus's book. Somehow he had not got the right manner. Simon would have known how to tackle Jim. Alan was getting nowhere. The two of them just sat opposite one another, with these long pauses.

His thoughts slid back to his own affairs. He would take a job in his stepfather's business. It would put him right in the thick of things. Just what he needed. He would be amongst people, active, occupied, not worried about himself. He would make something new of it. From his reading he would have the background, the general knowledge, the ideas. Next came the practical experience. The ideas would have to wait until he knew what he was talking about. It might take years, but he was used to patience now. He would start from the beginning and go through the whole business, yards and all. He would go on the ships, working his passage, seeing for himself. Then, one day, he would be ready to put the ideas into execution. It was not money he wanted. Power he did want, power to do something new, to give people a bigger chance.

There was a prisoner called Johnson who would help him. Johnson was in shipping. He was unpopular, because he was always buzzing about, getting to know people and trying to sell

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people things; rather like Fred Martin, but more earnest. Simon Dempster could not stand him. He was so common.

'I know I shall meet him in Piccadilly one day, before I have time to put my umbrella up,' Simon had said once. 'I might have to ask him to lunch. I know I should never be able to avoid him. . . .'

Alan's thoughts carried him away. He forgot completely about Jim, until Jim said abruptly.

'I think I'll go to bed, Alan.'

'Yes, it's getting late.'

They got up and trailed upstairs to their room. Alan had done no good at all. It was not his fault. There was nothing to be done with Jim in that mood. He seemed to like locking himself up. Well, it was his own look-out.

PART FIVE

LIBERATION

(Six months)

At long last!

The invasion of Europe! They had begun to think it would never happen. And on June 6th, too. The prisoner's dream had come true. He had won ten cakes. From that time on he believed in visions.

The Germans knew it first. Rudi heard it on the German wireless and told Fisher, who told Alan. All day the rumour was going round, but nobody would believe it. They had been taken in too often. At last, about four o'clock, the Sneak came in with the German newspapers over his arm. He was almost smothered. There it was: 'The Battle in the West has begun', in huge black letters. The prisoners crowded round, standing on tiptoe, peering over each other's shoulders, while the Sneak grinned and smirked and seemed quite proud of himself, as if it were his invasion. They snatched the newspapers from one another.

'Give it to me.'

'Let's see it.'

'Read it out.'

'It's true, boys; yes, it's true.'

'Isn't it wonderful!' said Simon Dempster. He was almost in tears from excitement, and spoke to quite a number of strangers. 'Isn't it marvellous!' he cried, flickering happily from group to group.

Everything else was forgotten. Everywhere were smiling faces and excited voices. For four years they had waited for to-day. Now there was nothing left except freedom. All over the walls sprouted maps of Normandy. Everybody knew where Caen and Bayeux and St. Lo were. Afternoon after afternoon in came the Sneak with the newspapers, and the prisoners pounced on him.

'What does the communiqué say?'

'Come on, read it out.'

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'Quiet, everybody. Let one man read it.'

'Listen to this. "Small allied gains, advance checked." That's good. It's probably a break through.'

'I've heard this before. See what they say. "The High Command have their plans." That's what they said about Russia.'

At last, at last!

Major Ford made a coloured map of Northern France, and the landings and lines of advance were marked with pins. The prisoners were flabbergasted at the scale of the invasion. They had expected something vast — they felt they had a right to it — but nothing quite like this. They couldn't believe it. When they saw the German press photographs of the ships, whose sides opened to discharge tanks, and read about the naval and air bombardment, and the vehicles that drove through the sea, and the mechanical crocodiles and hippopotomi, and the weird inventions that ploughed a way through the mined beaches, they began to feel like survivors from antiquity.

'Do you remember our landing? No tanks, one Bren per battalion. Everyone's got one now.'

'Remember 1940? Now it's the Huns' turn. See what they say? "A temporary air superiority rests with the enemy..." Seem to have heard *that* before.'

The Germans enjoyed the hugeness of the invasion. They respected the enormous and concentrated and thorough, even if it was on the opposite side. They were very anxious. The long suspense and the uncertainty where it was coming had upset them. They were not surprised it had got ashore successfully. They published a great deal about it and reserved their judgment. They had not yet reached the nadir of their fatalism. Lower points of apathy and resignation were still to be touched. The Sneak of course knew that everything would be all right. Once he had said that the Allies would never land. Now that they had been allowed to land, he said that this was a ruse, and soon they would be flung back into the sea. It was only a matter of time before the High Command threw in their strategic and tactical

reserves and then — another Dunkirk. He was not quite so certain as he had been in 1940 and '41, but he still smiled pityingly.

'Yes, Field-Marshal Rommel is in command,' he said. 'He is the greatest general of the war and he will take his time. You have had an initial success. The invasion has been well organized. We expected that. The Americans are good organizers.' He paused for effect, and then spoilt the point by pushing it home. 'Yes, the Americans are very good organizers. They have organized England into an American colony.' He waited, but it was too old a bait and nobody rose; and he went on. 'You may be allowed to get forty or fifty miles inland and then Rommel will strike.'

Alan said, 'Isn't he leaving it a little late? We're landing thousands of men every day. And tanks. And guns. I thought the Atlantic Wall was impregnable.'

The Sneak smiled. But he had not quite persuaded himself, for he came back a little later and said casually:

'How many men would you have on shore at present?'

'Nearly a million,' said Alan, without hesitation.

'As many as that?'

'Easily.'

'It's a lot to be destroyed,' said the Sneak. 'But you realize they'll be very vulnerable in a small area. A million?' he repeated, looking at Alan suspiciously.

'At least a million,' said Alan.

The Sneak stood about, trying to think of an answer.

'Ja!' he said inconclusively, and went away, with his long nose and his spectacles, a little uneasy, a little less sure of himself.

'He doesn't know anything about the fighting,' said Rudi. 'He's never been near a front; he's a base line man. He's all talk.'

'Will you be going back again?' Alan asked.

Rudi dropped his hand in front of his face, with that familiar gesture of the German soldiers, as if knocking a fly off his nose.

'Me going back?' he said. 'Not if I can help it.'

Several of the younger sentries had lately been drafted to the east front. Rudi was not yet twenty-five; he knew what the

east front meant. He coughed so hard now that Alan thought it might be genuine. He went off less often on his bicycle. His father and mother worked his farm, but his wife remained in Dresden in the ordnance factory, and the air bombardment made him very nervous. He would slip into Alan's room on the top floor and work his emotions off in a hoarse hurried whisper. He called it *Abregierungsmittel*, letting off steam.

'Why don't you hurry and finish it? Everyone knows we can't win. We're only waiting for you to finish it. How long will it be?'

'Four months, perhaps,' said Alan.

'No. Faster. Sooner than that. Then the raids will stop, won't they? Do hurry, hurry, hurry.' Rudi exclaimed insistently, leaning forward over the table with his rifle trailing against his legs; and then the sirens would start to howl along the valley, and the castle windows would rattle in the huge reverberations from Dresden, twenty-five miles away, and Peter Wade and Fred Martin would race up to the top windows and watch for the planes.

Fisher told Alan that the foreigners down in the factory were very much excited. He could see them in groups in the stable yard. They gazed up at the castle and waved and stuck their thumbs up. One night they heard shooting and Fisher told Alan that six of the Russian workers had escaped and the German guards had panicked. Everyone was on edge.

Fisher asked Alan over to the soldiers' quarters to drink a bottle of hooch.

'Don't worry,' he said, 'it won't be anything like Burns Night. Crikey! I had a terrible head after that. Fell was worse, though.'

'Enough to last the rest of my life,' said Fell. 'Something awful.'

'Would you like to bring one of the other officers?' said Fisher.

Alan would have liked to bring Jim Irving, but even now Jim was too gloomy. He asked Harry Ferguson instead.

'I'll bring my camera,' said Harry.

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'Where did you get that from?'

'I made it. I've been collecting parts for months. It's not much, but it will take a photograph. Rudi got me a film. I'd like a shot of some of the orderlies.'

He took a photograph with the bottle of hooch in the middle, and Fell and Fisher and the Welsh boys sitting on their bunks.

'It'll look bad for discipline,' Harry said laughing, 'but the war'll be over soon and I reckon we can relax.'

He seemed to be surprised at finding himself there. Fisher was reserved and scrupulously polite, as he had been at first with Alan.

'Wish Mr. Wilson was here,' he said. 'He was a lad.'

'Ah, that's true,' Fell said.

Fisher poured the hooch into white mugs.

'Well, here's to the boys in Normandy,' he said.

And they drank to success and a speedy return home for everyone.

By the middle of July the prisoners were breathless with the speed of events. They were out of training. They were so used to nothing happening. Although they prided themselves on being disillusioned, as soon as the news became good all their old optimism came out of dock. After a time they took it almost as a studied insult if there was not a victory each day. On July 20th they were very much excited. The German wireless announced that an attempt had been made to assassinate Hitler. Colonel Count von Stauffenberg, a member of an old German family, had entered the Fuehrer's headquarters with a bomb, which he placed between the Fuehrer's legs. When the bomb went off, according to the official account, windows were blown out, beams and plaster were torn off the ceiling, and several admirals and generals were flung across the room; the Fuehrer escaped with scratches. A plot was unmasked. A clique of dissatisfied generals were said to have been conspiring with a handful of noblemen and business men to overthrow the nazis and negotiate for an armistice with Great Britain and America.

Some of the conspirators committed suicide, others were arrested. There was a gloating trial. The raucous spite and vulgar sneers of the judges shocked Alan as much as anything he read of or heard of in Germany throughout his imprisonment. More than anything it brought home to him the total debasement of the German nation. The chief judge called the prisoners swine and announced that they were guilty before they had spoken in their own defence. He condemned them gleefully to strangulation. The customary sentence for high treason was beheading, the executioner wearing white gloves. Strangulation, it was said, meant that the men's necks were to be broken by a jerk upwards, not by the drop, which is the law in England. The ringleader, Field-Marshal von Witzleben, asked to be shot. This was refused. Not many days after his execution Alan noticed in the obituary columns of the newspapers that five close relations of his, women, had also died.

Hitler broadcast his thanks to Providence. All Germany was ordered to hang out flags. On the appointed day Alan looked out of the window and saw only half the village of Durheim beflagged. Figures in uniform went round the streets, and by midday every house had its swastika. Standing at one of the castle windows that looked into the outer court-yard, Alan heard the rasping voice that controlled their destinies. It was the same voice in which the German N.C.O.s usually spoke and had no soft tones. The day was warm and beautiful with a light wind that set the green leaves of the lime trees quivering on their stems. The manager of the factory had driven his car in on a visit to the Commandant, and Hitler's speech was coming over his set. Rudi slouched past without listening. The Sneak appeared; for the prisoners' benefit he stood with one foot on the running-board, registering approval, disgust, or amazement, according to the tenor of the speech. The Commandant walked out of his quarters smoking a cigarette. It was the first time Alan had seen him hatless; he had silver-grey hair cropped to the bone. He listened a few minutes and went in again. The stout wives of the German officers returned from shopping, and Alan saw the

typist with whom Treidfeld was supposed to relax. The prisoners often watched her, admiring her long legs.

The speech went on for a long time. Hitler said that a little band of traitors, effete, ambitious, and representing no one but themselves, had tried to murder him and betray Germany to her enemies; 'but Providence saved me for my people . . . Once again the Almighty has shown us that He is on our side. . . .'
Gott mit uns, the motto all the German soldiers wore on their belts. 'The struggle may be hard,' he said, 'but finally we shall be victorious. From now on the home front will come under the command of Heinrich Himmler and the German people will be asked to make extraordinary sacrifices.' Hitler's speech was punctuated and ended with wild applause, in solid waves at rhythmical intervals. He had been speaking to the party leaders.

Alan remembered the prophecy which Morshead had made at Simon's supper party. He had been quite right. The traditionalists had risen against the nazis, the upper class against the upstarts.

'I don't take any credit for it,' said Morshead. 'It was bound to happen. They're scared of losing everything if the war goes on. Exactly the same happened in Italy. Unfortunately it came off there and not here.'

'What do you think will happen now?' Alan asked.

'I should think the fanatics would take control.'

'Do you really think there's a likelihood of a revolution?'

'To be honest, I don't,' said Morshead. 'The workers in Germany are exhausted and cowed. I don't think it's a revolution the influential anti-nazis are scared of, so much as Russia. Their last hope is a separate peace with us.'

'There's no hope of that.'

'Not now. Though if Colonel Anstruther were Prime Minister, I expect they'd get it.'

The news grew better and better. Avranches, Falaise, and then the liberation of Paris. The prisoners made preparations to go home. Bags were packed, possessions given away, and people made desperate attempts to make up for the lost years. Peter

Wade sat down to some books on engineering. Fisher released his last few bottles of hooch. Bill Franklin bought them at ten pounds apiece. He had laid very heavy odds on the war ending before Christmas and his only conversation was why this was bound to happen. There was something unpleasant in his exultation about the invasion. He asserted himself over the Europeans in the castle. He patronized the French and was annoyed when people praised the French Resistance movement. He wanted all the credit to go to the British, because he was British and it made him feel good and gave him back his self-confidence.

Geoffrey Larkin worked away feverishly with his paints. Simon was pleased because he hoped he would get back for the shooting. Harry Ferguson went through all his wife's letters and filed them in three large boxes. Major Ford gathered more and more of the strings of the castle into his hands. He ordered that pay should be wound up, and that books should be handed back to the library, and he pressed the Brigadier to prepare for taking over the castle and a large area in the neighbourhood. He reminded Alan slightly of the dynamic little general who had commanded them in Norway. His organization in the village was ready, and he believed that at the right moment his friends there would be able to take over all the key positions. He expected that this might be necessary in a very short time. He himself might perhaps end the war controlling a slice of German territory. He would have done it very well.

Under the prisoners' excitement there were traces of anxiety. Freedom had been a remote prospect until now. It had always been 'In a few months we'll be out', or 'By Christmas', or 'We shan't see another spring here'. It came as a shock to think, as now they did think, that they might be out in a few weeks. Suddenly they realized that they would have to face responsibility and do things for themselves. In the castle everything had been done for them. They had never had to queue or fill in ration cards. They cooked their own food, but they had never had to fetch it. Because they lived communally, the small daily

jobs came their way only at intervals. If they wanted to stay in bed all the morning, they could. If they wanted to do nothing, they could do nothing.

They feared that their initiative had been fatally sapped. Fred and Peter meant to do something active the moment they were free. If Peter could get a ship right away, and Fred go straight back on to operational flying, then they would be all right. They were afraid they would be kept hanging about, still doing nothing; and gradually it would become a habit and from a habit a disease. They would lose the power to act. For the regular soldiers there was always the Far Eastern war. They might make good there, begin their wrecked career again, prove themselves. But if the Far Eastern war came to a sudden end what would become of them? Garrison duties, barrack squares, for the rest of their days? Life would have no object for them.

Still, they were young, even though they had missed half their youth. They could adapt themselves. It was much worse for the older prisoners, who had been thrown away like scrap just at the moment when they should have been coming into their own. Those of them who still had ambitions and wanted to make something of themselves, like Ford, feared that the world had moved too fast for them. They still had confidence in their own abilities; but, after all, they had been out of things five years and other people might not see it in their way. They dreaded pity and charity. Conscious that they were built for achievement, they might find themselves politely passed from the castle to places not much better; dead ends, back-waters, where gradually they would rot and grow embittered.

And there were some who had lost any ambitions they had ever had. They did not care what happened, if only they could have peace and oblivion. Prison causes certain men to envy the birds. They beat their wings on the bars, and when they are free they want to fly. These others were at the opposite extreme; they wanted to become vegetables, and some of them were on the way.

A few had even acquired a kind of affection for the castle, and

secretly would have regrets over leaving it. The castle had become a habit with them. They knew it, and they were afraid of going to places they did not know. And there were the ones who had had a kind of success there, who had enjoyed something which could not be repeated outside. In ordinary life they would probably be rather lonely, and in the castle they had quite enjoyed living with a crowd. They had made a friend or two; once they were free, the friendships would break up, and they would be alone again. They were the kind who hate leaving school and are always thinking back to it.

Perhaps the theatrical company, or some of them, would have their regrets at liberation. They had enjoyed acting, and they had been admired and applauded and lived in the public eye; at home they wouldn't have a chance. Upstairs, in their dressing-rooms, and on the stage, they lived in a world of their own.

Better than anyone else, they managed to forget that they were in a prison, and they threw themselves into their productions as the athletes threw themselves into their yard-games. On the dressing-table, in front of the only big mirror in the castle, lay wigs, rouge, powder, grease-paints. On the walls were posters of the repertoire . . . *Rookery Nook* . . . *Private Lives* . . . *The Importance of Being Earnest*. The window, on the top floor, overlooked the tiles and steeples of the town. The sun poured in and wood-pigeons whirled past, swooping at a tangent to the castle walls. The actors sat round with cups of tea, chatting gaily about the next production, gossiping about the castle, hero-worshipping Tony Masterman. He had given up his brusque manner and had played the leading lady in so many shows now that he had become remarkably, Alan thought refreshingly, feminine. There was nothing obscene about this change. Some of the female representations repelled Alan, especially the rouged lips and cheeks, which always seemed so garish, and the broad shoulders showing so obviously under an evening dress. But Tony Masterman seemed to change effortlessly. His hair had to be long all the time now; and even off stage, in the court-yard, he became gliding and responsive like a woman, with smiles for

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everyone and graceful movements. The prisoners laughed at him and said it was a danger for him; but nobody attempted to stop him, and really they were glad. When he was on the stage he wore long dresses, fitting closely to his slim body, and they could really imagine that he was a woman, without any sense of the abnormal, and were grateful for the illusion. He had many admirers and there were jealousies and sullen or angry episodes; but he remained intact and polite, submitting to the transformation pleasantly for the time being, as a kind of public service.

In general, the prisoners' chief misgivings were about their families and about society. These two circles, the large and the small, within which they had moved with ease and happily five years ago, might have altered so much that it would take them years to fit themselves in again. Some of them had married only a few weeks before the war started and had scarcely known their wives. They had been away from women four years and their wives had been surrounded with men, the glamorous Poles, the skilful French, and the indefatigable Americans. They were afraid they would have lost their understanding and their technique, and would be nervous and tongue-tied, and that their wives would soon be sick of them. So they were getting ready to adopt a disguise. It was the kind of disguise that men who have not been prisoners at all often put on when faced with some awkward situation. For the prisoners it was particularly foolish. For quite a while they could not really expect to have command of things. No one who had been cooped up for years, existing on an inadequate diet, could hope to recover his normal virility and balance of mind for months. It was best to accept that and be patient. But many of them thought they ought to put on a show. They would not like to confess their quite natural fear of impotence or their inevitable loss of self-confidence. Out of their trials someone newer, tougher and more mature could emerge, and they were afraid of the transition. And so they wanted either to run away or bury their heads in the bosom of the past. Bill Franklin was really terrified of meet-

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ing his wife. Male vanity was at stake. He was so proud of himself that he could never bring himself to admit any weakness. If she had any discernment she might see what prison had done to him. She would guess from the sharp voice and fussy manner. He would never tell her himself. Already he had stopped writing to her. If she had a weak character she would probably have left him already. If she had a strong character she might try for a while to make something of him. But he yielded so little, he was so vain that she might not think it worth the trouble. And then he would be adrift, hawking round another pretext for self-pity.

The prisoners feared too that society as well as their wives might have changed. For most of them the social order had been a kind of cushion. Before the war they had had a chance to get the best out of life. They had not really lived, but they had been comfortable. They felt disquieted now. People were talking so much about socialism and communism, that there really seemed some danger of these fanciful ideas being put into effect. As long as it happened slowly they did not mind; very slowly, so that they could arrange the cushions differently at leisure. But they did not really like the idea of any changes at all. They were so uncertain of themselves as individuals. Young men like Simon had allowed rank and breeding, young men like Bill had allowed money to serve instead of character, and they had developed extraordinarily little of their own. They were not confident that they could stand erect, if their inherited props were to be withdrawn.

II

ALAN went ahead with his own work, hoping to have his books finished before the liberation. He got up now before the early morning *appel*. He had breakfast, which was a mug of coffee and two slices of bread and jam, and after the rooms had been

swept he settled down at one of the big tables, wearing a great-coat and a scarf. He rationed himself to five cigarettes in the morning and five in the afternoon. Twice a week he played a game called stool-ball in the yard. It was a very dangerous game and the prisoners threw themselves into it with abandon. A goalkeeper sat at either end on a stool, protected by two backs. The three forwards had to get the ball under the stool. They could use almost any means they liked. They bore down on the backs, swerving and dodging and feinting, and then hurled themselves at them head on. The backs were not allowed to step aside; if they had done so, the forwards would have gone straight into the stone wall and cracked their skulls. They tackled one another round the neck, waist, knees, anywhere, and the game never ended without injuries. The other prisoners lined the walls, and when there was an exciting game, their cheering could be heard in the town. At the end Alan had a cold bath, and felt much better.

He still went now and then to Lissow's lectures. Lissow was very cunning. He pretended to be talking about German art and literature, but sooner or later there came the twist and he was talking propaganda. He said that the Russians had no culture at all and that French culture was decadent. English and German culture were superior and creative, he said, and the two countries were naturally suited to be allies. He had a smooth soft voice. He limped forward from his desk and holding a book of poetry in front of him he recited line after line, affectionately, caressing the verses, leaning his weight on a syllable or on a word. He spoke very firmly and gave the impression that he was displaying a part of himself. His feeling for his country's writing was deep and sincere, an ember burning somewhere in a twisted catacomb. The passion he had never given to life had gone into literature. In life he was sly and vengeful and frigid. It amused him to be a propagandist and catch the prisoners out. He liked to draw Major Ford, who went to the lectures in the vain hope of making a fool of Lissow or possibly coaxing him into collaboration.

'You should listen to the German wireless,' said Lissow once. 'There are some very good concerts.'

'You've turned out all your best musicians,' Ford answered.

'The Jews have gone. They were not the best musicians. We have plenty others who are much better. All those who have been turned out of Germany have now got good jobs in England and America. That shows you cannot have had very good musicians of your own.'

'There is plenty of good music in England.'

'But not as in Germany. It is part of the life of our people. In every big town an opera house. Concerts everywhere. We are always singing and listening to music. And soon, when — as you say — you defeat us,' he said with sneering white lips, 'we shall have negro jazz and Mr. Bing Crosby, shall we not? That is the new great civilization. I hear it on your gramophones when I walk round the court-yard at night, and I am sorry for the friends the English have made.'

'Is that the only music you hear? You don't keep your ears as close to the ground as I thought,' said Ford heavily.

'No, it is not the only music that I hear. Sometimes I hear you playing the symphonies of Brahms and Haydn, of Beethoven and Mozart, and then I am pleased, and think to myself this is the England that I used to know, the England of Shakespeare . . .'

He was so smarmy that he angered, but he nearly always had the last word. It was his job. He played upon all that was resentful in the prisoners. He played upon the distrust of France which he knew they felt after their disappointment and capture in 1940. He played upon their anxieties concerning Russia. His audiences dwindled. Alan had gone in the first place to learn German, in order to escape. He would have continued, when he no longer wanted to escape, in order to hear something about German history. But there was always the twist. Lissow was one distorted limb in the national perversion. He turned everything to his purpose. Alan remembered the Lutheran hymn he and Tug had heard that morning in church, with its strong grave cadences. In the present day it had become the hysterical

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staccato chanting of the Hitler youth. Both had passion. One had been spontaneous, out of the heart and out of the soil; the other arrogant, artificial, diseased.

That summer Lissow made a concession. In the afternoons the prisoners were allowed out of the castle for short walks in an enclosed garden. Outside the gates the scene was always the same. The guard company off duty sprawled in the blazing sun. One of them lay on a bench in his shirtsleeves, his head hanging back and his mouth open, snoring. Four others sat at a table near the stone porch playing cards with a dirty pack. They slammed the cards down, raising their arms high in the air and shouting, really shouting at one another. You expected them to draw a gun at any moment, but it was their normal way of talking. Another was strumming a mandoline. The prisoners formed up to be counted and thirty guards went with them as escorts, holding their rifles under their armpits like gamekeepers. The garden was a small green lawn surrounded by trees, near the place where Alan had escaped. He could hear the stream nearby. The sun slanted between the trees and the leaves of the limes were transparent and lemon-coloured with the sun. He took off his shirt and lay on the grass with his fingers spread out. His fingers seemed to become like roots, growing out of the earth. The sun seemed to pour upward through the trees and through him like a fountain of warmth. His thoughts left him; and when he was beginning to feel flooded with peace a whistle blew and they all had to fall in and go back.

Most evenings he had an appointment with Johnson, whom he had consulted on Morshead's advice. Morshead thought he should take the job in his stepfather's firm. 'You've got to live somehow,' he told Alan, 'and you've got to get experience. You'll get invaluable experience in a place like Barrow, though you'd better keep your political opinions to yourself. I don't hold much with men who see lights and give everything away and become missionaries. It's all very fine, but they lose touch and when the time comes they may not be much use. If somebody told them to-morrow, "Here's the power, now start work",

most of them would be entirely stranded. I should take the job and find out something about it from Johnson beforehand.'

Johnson was not very helpful at first. He looked at Alan suspiciously. He seemed to suspect everyone. He thought of the world as a place in which everybody was always trying to get the better of everybody else, and when anybody asked him a favour his reaction was to think what favour he could ask in return. This wisdom had come to him from what he had seen himself. He was resolved to get on and so he watched people in order not to be fooled by them.

When Alan explained about his stepfather Johnson's eyes opened wide and he became more interested.

'The Walter Thurlow?' he said. 'The one who owns the lines?'

'Yes, that's the one.'

Johnson's manner changed. Certainly he would help. They spent several hours a week together. Johnson became very friendly. He sat at Alan's side giving him figures, telling him stories, tapping with the point of his pencil. His heart was in the job and he became himself.

'Which side will you go into?' he said. 'Technical? Design? Administrative?'

'I reckon administrative,' Alan said.

'Yes, that's where the power is, if it's power you want. Personally, I'm hoping to get a job abroad. There'll be big competition for the export trade. Do you know anything about chartering?'

'Not much.'

'We'll have to go into that. Thurlow's chiefly the West Indies route. You'll get excited by it; you can't help it. I wish I had an opening like yours.' He looked at Alan suddenly, like a wasp, wondering whether to sting him. 'The great thing on your side,' he said, 'will be getting to know the people who matter and making yourself pleasant to them. You want to cultivate that. That fellow Dempster, for example. His father's a powerful man. You're in his mess, aren't you? That's useful. You were at a public school, weren't you?'

'Yes, I was.'

'A big one?' Johnson asked enviously.

'Not very,' answered Alan.

'All the same . . . Dempster was at Eton, I believe. I don't think much of his brains, but he's got a lot of charm. I expect you know what I mean.'

'Do you admire his manners?' Alan asked.

'Well, it's all useful, you know. Once you get into the business you'll see that. Not that Dempster himself would ever get on in business. Good gracious, no! But I've nothing against him. He's always very polite to me.'

Alan said nothing, remembering Simon's suave voice and slight lift of the eyebrows . . . 'I know I shall meet him in Piccadilly . . . I shall have to ask him to lunch . . . how frightful.'

He worked for an hour with Johnson and then came the last *appel*. So the night arrived. The lights went out at ten o'clock. He couldn't read by a flickering fat lamp. There was no fat to spare, and the flame burnt low. He was not the only one. On every floor restless spirits wandered through the high draughty rooms in search of a quiet place. He would think he had found somewhere deserted, and suddenly he would hear voices, and see the red stubs of cigarettes, or a gramophone would start up, so that he had to go away and look elsewhere. At times he had so nearly seized the idea he was pursuing that he blindly hated these interrupters. Once, ousted from every room, he spent an hour under the stairs, sitting in the boot hole.

He was worrying himself about the state of the world, which many people think it is most sensible to give up as lost. Perhaps it was conscience that drove him. Conscience had made him join the absurd territorial army before the war. Conscience had made him volunteer for the expedition to Norway. Conscience had led him to escape, and now conscience urged him on along the path that Tomavich and Morshead suggested to him. Perhaps it was something more thrusting than conscience; there was always that magnet hanging somewhere in the air through which he moved, making him climb and investigate. He worked so

that he could become independent. He was not going to rely on his stepfather's job. He wanted expert knowledge of something useful so that there would always be a demand for him, and one day he might be able to make his own conditions. From his reading he drew a strength he had not suspected. He had opened his eyes and messages came from all horizons, encouraging him and leading him on. There were some he decoded only slowly and some perhaps he would never clarify, but there were many that always seemed to have been lying near and he only had to pick them up and read them. If he read or glanced at a well-known book the words might have been his own, so rapid was the response. All the time I have been thinking this, he would say to himself, but Marx or Nietzsche, or D. H. Lawrence or Shakespeare have been into my heart and my mind, and said it for me. He read *The House of the Dead*, in which Dostoevski describes his years as a prisoner in Siberia among the convicts. The words with which it ends welled up in him over and over again as he walked in the court-yard or lay awake at night, giving him an extraordinary thrill. He promised himself he would never say them aloud until he was free; and then he would go away and repeat them to himself somewhere outside the castle, somewhere in the country. They would be the first words of his rebirth.

In childhood his father had taught him a game called *Sors Biblica*. He had to open the Bible, shut his eyes and put his finger on a passage, and that passage was his fortune. He did it one day in the castle and the words came out . . . 'And I saw a new Heaven and a new earth, for the old Heaven and the old earth were passed away.' It did not seem to him a coincidence but natural. He had begun to acquire that vivid and alert sensation, as if everything were moving into focus. It was the sensation he had had during his escape, when the world came to life. It was the world now of ideas and history rather than the world of visible and tangible things. After liberation it would be the world of things again. Now his experience was in books. He tried not to over-simplify, yet really it seemed that many riddles

he had once thought to be beyond him and labyrinthine had very simple answers. The mists lifted, and one night he dreamed an unforgettable dream.

Fred Martin and his friends had been talking about the war with Japan. Alan had only been half listening, but the Far East was in his mind. He dreamed that a tremendous and terrible battle was being fought somewhere on the huge plains of Central Asia, and that he was taking part. It was not a modern battle; there were no tanks and no aircraft. It was medieval, feudal. He had a dazzling impression of tossing plumes and peacock banners, swaying in the midst of interlocking warriors, and of chargers with scarlet saddle cloths and jewelled plumes, and sweating men, half naked, with coal black smouldering eyes. The armies clashed, and he dreamed that the heart of the battle parted and he saw lying among the uplifted hooves of the horses, the swaying stabbing bodies, and the heaps of wounded and murdered, a Chinese boy with a beautiful face, who was dying in great pain. He went to see what help he could give, and as he leant down, the boy's features became smooth and calm and he said, 'All men are brothers.'

Alan woke knowing that he would never forget this dream. He understood as he lay on his bunk with the memory still bright how it was that men came to think that they had seen visions. This had been a vision. It had been so vivid that he believed the battle had been fought, was perhaps still being fought in the valley under the castle, and that he had only to go outside to find the dead body stretched in the fields.

Afterwards he smiled at himself for having dreamt in this way. It almost annoyed him. Dreaming would get him nowhere. He had dreamt too often in boyhood and it had led him out of touch. He thought, 'I have two sides, my soft side and my hard side. When I'm lying on my soft side I dream these dreams, I believe the best of everyone, I imagine that people are impulsive like Tug, natural and interested in one another like Ivan and Mischa, devoted like Dr. Tomavich, and I forget the struggle. When I'm lying on my hard side I think that this castle is divided into floors

and cells and that the floors and cells are eternally separated. I think of Bill Franklin, with his meanness and his selfishness, of Count Eulenstein with his vanity, of Johnson, scheming and small-minded, of the perverted Germans, and of Jim with his despair. I think that I can, if I choose, have power, and with this power get the better of my fellow men who work less, aim at less and take less trouble than I do. I think that every man should look out for himself and that I shall be a fool if I try to act in a different spirit.'

The ordinary conflict of youth between the world as it is and the world as it could be had begun inside him. He did not know what would become of it, but he recognized it. His thoughts, and the things he had read during the day, took sides against one another and wrestled with one another after he had gone to bed. His mind was in a state of constant ferment, and at times he felt exhausted.

One evening the news was unbelievably good. The Americans were said to have reached the Rhine. Fisher said that down in the village people expected a complete break-through. After the news had been given out there was a gramophone concert in the theatre. There were no lights, and Alan could see his fellow prisoners only as shapes, motionless, with their faces like grey blotches. Marcus's great bulk was humped on the floor against a pillar. Fisher was near Alan, his features intent and listening. Alan did not know what was being played, but the music went idly and peacefully through his head, like sand slipping through the fingers on a hot beach.

Up in his room that night the music went on inside him, and thoughts were born and vaguely wafted amongst the notes. It came to him that the yearning which created this music, and the yearning which he felt himself, for to-morrow to be a better world, were the same. The composer was one of a very few. The violinist who had played, and the orchestra in the great hall who had accompanied were very few. All who wanted to prove that the world was something light and magical were always in the minority, but they were the same. Fisher and he wished to act,

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others to think, others to create, but Fisher and himself and the artists and the thinkers were all the same.

From the bunk next to him he saw Jim Irving get up, put on his greatcoat, and walk out of the room. He knew that he couldn't go to sleep and, if Jim felt the same, perhaps they could talk. He followed Jim out of the room a few minutes later. He walked along the deserted corridors, and outside the bathroom he heard a tap running. He opened the door and went in. Jim was on the far side, near the window.

'Hullo,' said Alan. 'An unusual time for a cold bath.'

Jim started and turned round. He was in his shirtsleeves; the sleeve of his left arm was rolled above the elbow. His face was very white.

'Hullo, Alan,' he said and turned back to the window.

'Sleeping badly?'

'Yes.'

'I'll put the water off.'

On the window sill at Jim's side were a dozen cigarette ends, some of them still smoking, and a cut-throat razor with the blade open. Alan closed the razor and put it in his pocket. Jim's eyes slanted towards him.

'What have you done that for?'

'I don't like it lying about. Is it yours?'

'Yes. Put it back.'

'You can't shave in this light.'

'Put it back,' he said, childishly angry.

'No.'

Alan stood behind him and touched him on the elbow. He was shuddering, although the night was not cold.

'Not much of a room to look at the view,' Alan said. 'Why not come and sit down.'

'Leave me alone.'

'I shall stay here until you come away,' Alan said cheerfully.

'Very well.'

He swung round, and Alan, thinking he was going to hit him,

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took him by the wrists. From a slackening of Jim's arms he could tell he did not want to resist.

'Come and sit down for a bit,' he said.

Jim resisted at first, but more to make a show of it than because his mind was set on anything. It wasn't difficult to control him. Like a blind man he allowed himself to be propelled along the dark passage into the empty dining-room, the one in which they had talked before. Jim sat at the table with his head in his hands. The water in the side boiler of the oven was still warm. Keeping an eye on Jim, Alan fetched cocoa and two mugs, and put one in front of him.

'Drink this.'

Jim shook his head.

'Go on, drink it. It'll do you good.'

Long ago he should have known it would come to this. He should have done something about it long ago. It was always the same in the castle. People were allowed to go on, coiling deeper and deeper inwards upon themselves, because no one had the power to drag them away. Everyone was occupied with himself. And then one day there were the taps running in the bathroom, or the rope hanging round the rafters, or a window open and the twisted body in the court-yard, and all the other paraphernalia, and it was too late.

Several minutes went by while neither of them spoke. Then Alan said: 'What's the matter, Jim? You'd better tell me. You've been brooding too much.'

If Jim wouldn't explain he would say that he had seen Marcus's book.

'You shouldn't get like this now,' he said. 'It can't be many more weeks. We've reached the Rhine. There's this landing at Arnhem. The Germans know that it's over. We'll be out in October.'

'Oh, yes, it'll be over all right.'

'You don't seem to like the idea.'

'It makes no odds.'

'No odds? Getting out of this place? Don't you want to be free?'

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'Yes, I want to be free all right.'

'Well, then . . .'

'Why not leave me alone then?'

Alan felt sorry for him, but rather perfunctorily. He could not reach him yet. The sombre mood did not communicate itself and he had no wish that it should. He had had enough of tragedy. He felt shocked and dismayed that it had come to this point, and thought that he was to blame a little himself. It was best to be patient with Jim, but he was not going through all that stone-breaking that had failed last time.

'Once we've crossed the Rhine, Jim,' he said, 'it'll only be a few weeks. The Russians will come in as well. They're due for an offensive. The Germans can't last out against both. It can't be more than a couple of months at the outside. We've been waiting four years. A couple of months isn't much.'

'It's not worth your while talking to me, Alan. You'd best leave me alone.'

'Not to-night. I'll stay up till morning if necessary.'

'I suppose you think you're saving me?'

He had become curt and sarcastic and Alan didn't think it worth answering. Later Alan said:

'You've been in a mood, that's all. Everyone gets them here. Yours has been longer. It's the fault of the place. None of us is normal. When we get free we'll forget the whole thing. Brian wrote to me the other day, after he'd got home. He said this place might never have existed. It was the same when I escaped. I felt I might never have been a prisoner.'

'You're different, Alan. Brian's different. I don't think of it in that way.'

'How do you think of it, then?'

'It's not really your affair, is it?'

'Yes, I think it is my affair. I don't like to see you like this.' He expected a sarcastic answer, but Jim said nothing. So he went on: 'I read what you had written in Marcus's dream-book.'

After a long pause Jim said: 'When did you read it?'

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'Weeks ago. He didn't show it me, of course. I found it by accident.'

'If you read it, why ask me all these questions then? You know what I mean. Why ask me?'

'I don't understand at all. Only a very little. Besides, you put at the end that there was nobody to talk to . . .'

'Nor has there been.'

'I tried the other day. You weren't very encouraging. You could have talked to Marcus.'

Jim laughed dryly and jerked his head up: 'Marcus?'

'Wasn't he interested?'

'Oh, I was useful as a specimen.'

'I thought he might have . . .'

'There was nothing Marcus could do.'

'He could have talked. He could have listened to you. He's good at all that.'

'He had his work. He was all right. You've got yours. Brian's got the war again. You're all all right.'

He was very obstinate, determined to have his isolation, his tragedy, and when he talked like this Alan felt a long way from him.

'You used to write, Jim,' he said.

'Used to. What is there to write about?'

'You used to talk to the padre a lot. Have you given that up? Or is he responsible for this?' Alan asked, trying to be light-hearted and not quite hitting the note. 'I couldn't have put up with him as long as you have.'

'He did his best. We didn't connect, that's all.'

'Are you finished with religion, then?'

'For Christ's sake, stop questioning me. What the hell's it got to do with you? Go away and leave me alone. Go away and do your work.'

His face was in the shadow, and when he moved only a shadow moved. The moon must have come through the clouds, for grey plaques appeared on the ceiling, and Alan saw Jim dimly, like a sketch half rubbed out, with black hair joining the darkness.

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Some women might find him very attractive, very romantic. They would think he had that Germanic melancholy and want to save him from himself. He was so inaccessible he might have walled himself up. Alan remembered what Tomavich had said about the nazi leaders . . . people like to keep their emotions inviolate . . . and it angered him. To his relief Jim broke the silence now, for the first time.

'You've been here the same time as me, haven't you?' he said, lifting his head.

'Yes.'

'What effect has it had on you?'

'I've had time to think.'

'And what have you thought about? Yourself?'

'Not all the time.'

'Oh, I know you read and work and so on. But you've thought about yourself. You've stood back from yourself?'

'Yes.'

'You've seen yourself as part of a setting?'

'I suppose so.'

'It's not very elevating, is it? Not very inspiring?'

'I hadn't considered it much. Not in that way. I just wanted to find out certain things. I was very ignorant before . . .'

'I don't mean book-knowledge. You haven't gone far. I don't blame you. It's much wiser if you can stop at a certain point and ask no more questions.' He raised his head and looked Alan in the eyes, for the first time. He was conscious of Alan now as an individual, coming away from himself a few steps.

'I suppose you're one of the people,' he said, 'who think there's going to be a brave new world. Your senses will all wake up again. Touch, feel, sight, everything that has been deadened by the tonelessness here will wake up. Have yours been deadened? Mine have, and something else has become active. They say that blind men can see in the dark. I've seen a good way beyond anything those senses can reach. When you were away I saw . . .'

'I don't understand.'

'You've been different. You've got an objective or something

of that kind. Geoff said you'd seen a light. I saw something too and it was not a light.' At last he was talking. His voice was tired, but more reasonable. 'I had that dream,' he said, and it was an effort for him to describe it, 'that dream when the whole universe was covered with bars like this castle, and the people were beating at them, trying to get out. Brian saw something like that too. It's not true to go pretending that he was a hero. He wasn't anything of the sort. He was desperate. Desperate. Tug may or may not have seen it; you can think it out for yourself, as you were there with him. He wasn't so self-conscious, but he felt the same. It's not true to pretend that his action was entirely heroic and disinterested, is it? Is it?'

The days in the Josephine-strasse began to steal back over Alan. The brief struggle he had had with himself started again, gnawing and nagging away inside him, trying to destroy him. He recalled the memorial service for Tug, when he had looked out of the window and seen the wintry fields and the black forests standing up like charred cities. And once again he was in that listless ice-cold sea whose waves fell over him. A devil had come into the room. Jim's confidence seemed to grow and his own to ebb.

'This castle has clarified things,' said Jim bitterly. 'The darkness is ultimate, everything else is only a wish. The darkness is in me and outside me and they call to one another.'

'You want to think that, don't you?'

'No, I don't,' he replied quietly. 'It is my reason that tells me, as much as any other voice.'

'Christianity hasn't been much help to you. You've given up seeing the padre. I'm glad of that. He didn't seem to be the man for you.'

'No, he sickened me. When he was trying to persuade me he was trying to persuade himself. All the dogma and all the promises and love and kisses . . . it was all right for him. I got to despise him and I couldn't go on.'

'I'm glad you didn't.'

'Glad?'

'It's best to work it out yourself.'

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'Oh.' Jim's voice suddenly became confiding and lingering, a little regretful. 'I wish that padre had been a poet instead of a man who didn't really know how he stood himself,' he said. 'When I was a kid I used to love hearing those words read. I still do. I didn't mind then whether they were true or not. I was contented to listen. "In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you." It was a real picture for me. I could imagine white palaces and gardens and glistening clear spaces. I know now that it was all a dream.'

'And you believe in dreams, Jim?'

'I believe in my own, and mine have not been like that. Christ was a man and he had his dreams and they aren't mine. I don't deny their truth for him. They aren't universal, that's all, and they don't touch me, any more than you can touch me, or I you. You can't reach me, Alan, and you feel that.'

'I don't feel it, not always. Only at times I do. It's the same with all the others. We're continually coming closer and going away from one another. There's no permanent separation and there's no permanent union. When you're in these black fits I can't go so far. I can understand them, but I can't go the whole way. In that mood when you wrote those verses and as you used to be I can meet you. That's why I don't know what to say now. Only I'm certain it's wrong to have obsessions. The one mood isn't everything. You can't give in to it.'

'Why can't I?'

'Do you remember that man at the Heiligstein camp who killed himself? I never had less sympathy with anyone. I thought there must be something missing in me, but I couldn't be sorry for him, only angry, and sorry for his family.'

'He had a brainstorm.'

'So they said.'

'I don't count that. You don't know how conscious he was.' Alan was horrified now, as Jim went on speaking in his calm exhausted voice. 'I was beginning to feel peaceful when you came in. I had been looking out of the window a long while when you came, and something already seemed to be leaving

me. It was becoming natural, the thing that really I most wanted, to disappear, to merge, and I wasn't at all troubled. I had been looking at that white house, beside the river, and I had a sense of quiet.'

Alan knew that view. At night the house had an impassive, almost desperate air. The night was like a huge black cliff and the house seemed to cling to it, hanging at the crumbling edge of an abyss at the end of the world, precarious like a last hope. It disturbed him to look. It disturbed him at the same time to hear the wild cruel calls of the owls among the trees, and he always went to bed. Brian used to stare out of the windows too long. It had done him no good, staring hour after hour at that view.

Jim sat opposite, his head between his hands. A dead end had been reached, and Alan felt powerless, as if iron bands had been fettered on him from his forehead to his ankles and he could not stir. All the time he was convinced that Jim wanted to be guided away, but vanity prevented him. All that was most resolute in him rebelled against this mood of Jim's, and because its hold was so strong he felt a challenge and was not going to give in. A picture came into his mind. He was sitting with Tug above a gigantic valley. The valley was adrift with shawls of eddying grey mist. The mists became touched at the fringes with gold and suffused with red and gold. Gradually they lifted and there were the white mountains on the horizon, glistening and softly reddening in the morning sun. He wanted vehemently to be articulate, so that he could voice his own everlasting optimism, and infect others with it.

'I've been looking forward to freedom,' he said, 'really looking forward to it. Not as a release only, but as an adventure. People here say that they are all scrap, thrown away in a shipyard, rotting to pieces. When we're free something will breathe a little life into them, but not very much. Never enough to carry them farther than a harbour. At the most they'll just go coasting along from port to port. I shan't be like that. There is more than that, much more.'

'Yes, you disquiet me again,' said Jim, half continuing his own

thoughts. 'The peace has gone. You start the conflict again. You tell me that life is an adventure, and so on and so on. You'll tell me that when we are out of here the ordinary and simple things will be more enjoyable than we have ever known them to be. You'll be saying that we're lucky, because we shall realize our pleasures.'

'It's true, isn't it?'

'For a little while it might be true. People repeat it like parrots, just to please themselves. A decent meal, a warm bed, a walk in the country,' he said bitingly. 'They'll pall soon enough. So will everything else. What we shall have realized is something quite different. The boredom, the futility, will come back soon enough. Before we didn't know what it was. Now we do know.'

'And with women?'

'Yes, and with women. And with work. Sedatives, drugs, both of them. Just as people here abuse themselves and dig tunnels. Anything rather than think. Anything rather than face the truth. The darkness is the truth.'

'No,' exclaimed Alan, shaking his head. 'Only part of it. Work is part of it. Love is part of it. They aren't escapes.'

Jim shrugged his shoulders. He sat moving his hands up and down the sides of his mug, in which the cocoa had long gone cold, and after a silence he asked Alan:

'Have you been with many women?'

'One.'

'Only one? It's a strange thought,' he went on. 'We're the same age, but we seem to have had rather different experiences. You have some kind of a search to begin. I'm tired of mine. I was very tired of it to-night.' Alan did not miss that he was speaking of to-night as if it was already past. 'I don't know what the word is for the thing I really wanted. Anyhow I didn't find it. I suppose it's all accident. It needn't be the same for you.'

'The women I knew were clever, experienced, good-looking, good company, all the rest of it. They were supposed to belong to a very brilliant set. It makes me sick to think of them now. I got into it when I was nineteen, because I was supposed to be

able to write, and good-looking, and worth making a little bit of a fuss of. I went from one to another. It was bloody smart, having all those successes, and important people jealous about me, and a lot of attention. I had a very good time. I wouldn't have missed it. Parties, week-ends, cars, admiration . . . I had only to lift a finger and it was all laid on. I wasn't looking for anything then. I didn't have to then. It all came to hand. I wish I had had to look. I might have been more fastidious,' he said with irony.

'I wanted something deeper they were not developed to supply, and I didn't know that I wanted it. Events kept me happy and I never thought. They may have known and kept me in ignorance on purpose. It had been eaten out of them. They'd gone hard, like half the people here, thinking always of themselves and only of someone else if they wanted to make use of him or her, or sleep with them. So I hardened too. I found it out just before the war started. I'd been through them, one after another, one kind of love and another kind of love, always looking for new sensations, always on the surface, never deepening, and then it came to a stop. I knew it had come to a stop, and I'd missed everything I might have been out for.'

He had been talking rapidly, almost inaudibly, reluctant to humiliate and betray himself, like that German soldier at the little railway junction, dragging up his load of memories. Alan felt hostile to him. He didn't interrupt, but when Jim had finished he said:

'At least you know about it. Why should it all happen again? You're not thirty yet. Surely it's absurd to pretend you can't meet a different kind of woman.'

'Oh, there would be plenty to like.'

'Even before . . . wasn't there one in that poem you wrote? 'Poem?'

'The verses you gave us when we escaped.'

'I'd forgotten. I haven't forgotten her. When I was taken prisoner I was going to change. It was a chance. But she died and ever since I've gone steadily back.'

'So it is back?'

'Oh, I don't know. Let's go to bed.'

'As you like.'

But Jim didn't make any move, and after a while he said:

'She was really the one who is different.' He mocked the expression slightly and Alan was glad to hear the humour in his voice. 'You know the legend, Alan, about the disillusioned man who suddenly comes across a girl that's never been spoilt. It's a legend in every language. Well, it was like that. Plenty of men had been after her, but she'd never been seduced. She wasn't at all cold, or prudish, or repressed. She had a kind of existence of her own, that made her seem untroubled. She wanted me and I wanted her. I couldn't touch her. You read about it in the books in the legends, like that. Everything I'd learnt would only have cheapened her. I knew what I'd feel the moment I started. She'd just be one of the others, responding to this and not responding to that, and I would make her like all the rest. You need to be careful of that, Alan,' he said wryly. 'You don't want to be too successful.'

'I don't think there's much danger of that.'

'I was starting operational flights. I didn't want to be killed. I shouldn't have minded before. It seemed heroic and a way out and so on, but now I didn't wish to be. I saw the war properly, just savage. Then when I was taken prisoner I was going to change.'

'When did she die?'

'Two years ago. We'd just come here. I got the letter in this room, at the big table over there. The sun was going down. I'll always remember it. It was a very red sun, going down behind the forest.'

Alan felt sorry for him now. He was no longer talking about things that he had brought upon himself and brooded over; but about the accident, the shock he could not control, coming abruptly out of the blue. In the yard they could hear the sentry thumping up and down and below in the town the silver chime of a belfry touched the silence. Three o'clock. The moon was

full out. The reflection of the barred windows made a grille on the ceiling and the lines of the chairs and table were rectangular and hard.

'The dreams began after that,' said Jim. 'I wasn't interested when people talked about getting home. It would just be the same old thing and the dreams rubbed it in. I began to think it was being done as a torture. I couldn't talk to anyone . . .'

'Why not?'

'Who was there?'

His pride was uppermost again and Alan felt his sympathy going.

'Friendship isn't possible here,' Jim said. 'It's just an exchange of hard luck stories. When you've finished that's all. I don't know why the hell you listen yourself, Alan, unless you've got something you want to spout of your own.'

It was the twisted cynicism of the castle. The castle had made them all like that. There was no warmth. Everyone was embarrassed, twisted.

'No, there's nothing I want to say,' Alan answered. 'I'm content listening. Even when you say a thing like that.'

'Like what?'

'Your last remark.'

'I don't understand you.'

'It seems to me that you're stubborn and vain,' said Alan. 'You said that you'd learnt what the real background is. It seems to me that there's not any background except yourself. Yourself in the foreground and yourself in the background. You make yourself overpowering. No wonder you get these moods. I had them when I was in Munich. I never want to have them again. Can you not notice things and people outside yourself? Can you not save yourself that way? How can you ever write with yourself always in the way? You ought to write, Jim.'

'I don't know what it is,' he burst out. 'It seems I can't join in. I have something crooked. I can't get things straight. People come up and I want to talk and they sheer off. They're so scared of saying what they want to say and I'm the same. I'm not going

to crawl after them. I'd rather be alone. When I'm alone the moods begin, and that was it to-night.'

He had yielded. He was defending himself. He had stopped wallowing in his despair and he was against it now.

'It was this evening,' he said. 'It seems pointless now. I'd felt better all day. I'd just come out of the cells and you know how it is then. You feel refreshed and want to do everyone a good turn. There was someone in the room next ours strumming a guitar, and I started to talk to him. It was like the ice breaking. I thought I was getting clear of it all. Then I realized he wasn't listening and somehow that made me wild. Still, if he didn't want to talk he didn't have to. And then he suddenly went over to the window and whistled to someone in the yard, and began to say exactly the things that I'd been saying . . . it seems so bloody childish . . . I nearly hit him. I've never felt so isolated. I didn't belong. I don't know what it is. I just thought it was the truth and it was no good going against it. So I made up my mind.'

'I used to write,' he went on, 'and then it went dead on me. I never got any criticism, it was always praise. These people I used to go with never stopped praising. They didn't care a damn really.'

'I'll criticize,' said Alan. 'I don't know anything about it, but I'll criticize. Or what about Geoff?'

'Geoff!' said Jim and actually laughed. 'Yes, Alan, you might be a good critic. I don't know why, but you would be.'

'I think I've lost interest in myself,' said Alan. 'I like being with people for their own sake now. I like reading. I get lost in it. I look forward to the work I want to do. I look forward to being with women. There are so many things of which I have known nothing. It seems waste of time to bother about myself.'

'And you think you'll be satisfied?'

'I don't know that I want to be satisfied. I don't care for all these people here looking for comfort and satisfaction. That's why I didn't like your taking up with the padre. If I really went for religion it would be at the end of my life, as the last stage of an exploration. The momentum of one life would carry me on

to want more. I don't want ever to feel that I'm fulfilled for all time. I have moments of peace and quiet, but I don't want them for ever.'

'The search is all?'

'I don't know what you mean . . . I don't think about it. I know there are many parts of me and many ways of being fulfilled. If I go for them all perhaps I shall never be fulfilled, but I don't mind. I don't want to be bothered with myself. When I was in that Munich prison I felt I had no right to be distressed, with such things happening to others. I wish you had come there.'

'Maybe I should have acted like Tug.'

'No.'

'I wanted to escape then. I was sorry I lost the toss.'

'It was all the toss. We were the opposite sides of the coin, Jim. I might have gone your way. We were very similar, and I was getting very gloomy last year.'

The night was lifting rapidly and the outlines in the room were becoming plainer. Suddenly Alan felt the razor in his pocket and the horror of the scene as he might have found it crashed home to him. One gesture and a whole life, an instrument that could have responded to and recorded and enriched the world with its trouble and changes and glory slashed away; and nothing left but the scene and the disorder.

'We shall be free,' he said. 'Very soon we shall be free.'

'Yes, we shall be free,' Jim repeated to himself. 'We shall rest. We shall hear the angels sing and we shall rest. Have you ever read *Uncle Vanya*, Alan?'

'No, I haven't.'

'It's a play by Tchekov. It ends like that. I wonder often if he meant it seriously or in joke.'

He pushed the table away and they both got up. A speck of light was widening on the floor. A cock crew and then another and the birds were beginning to murmur. Far away, in the south, dawn would be coming up behind the mountains, the mountains of Yugoslavia, where Ivan and Mischa had gone.

'You won't try it again?' said Alan clumsily.

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'No.'

'You're sure?'

'Yes, I'm sure. We'd better get to bed.'

As they went to the door they saw Bill Franklin and his friends walking round the greying court-yard. They must have been gambling all night. Bill was talking loudly and looked angry.

'It's strange to think you've only been with one woman,' Jim said.

'It worries me sometimes. Less now than it used to. It's my complex.'

'What does?'

'This . . . well, innocence . . .'

'I don't see why it should. It enables you to remain an optimist. I should like to meet you in a few years' time. Maybe then *I'll* be persuading *you*.'

He laughed again, a short embarrassed laugh, not giving in to it, not admitting he had been won over, but more like the laugh Alan remembered in earlier days, before the castle had got the better of him.

III

WHEN Alan looked back on that conversation with Jim he was amazed at his own confidence. He had said things which he believed, but which he had not known were in his head. When he told Jim that he was beginning not to trouble about himself, it was really true, and one of the things the war had done for him. He understood why he was drawn to communism. Fascism was a kind of self-inflation, communism meant self-discipline. The nazi leaders were men with tortured overbearing ideas about themselves, men who had spent a great deal of time thinking about their personal troubles. It seemed to him that the communists were more occupied with the external troubles, the frustrations of others, the perfectly simple and fundamental difficulties of those who haven't enough money. To see issues like

this clearly and act upon them usefully the personality must not be in the way, for ever obscuring, for ever confusing. It should be developed to a point where it ran automatically, like a well-tuned engine.

Seeing and living with Tomavich had shaken him from self-absorption. The old doctor had made his own problems seem very puny. He could not always be in the company of men like that, but there was Fisher and the millions like Fisher, who curbed his own selfishness and kept him ready to subordinate himself to the just struggles of others. Prison, his part in the war, had come to be the making of him. Jim still had a long struggle ahead. He had become almost hopelessly introverted, and now, having reached the snapping point, he had to unwind, change front completely, and look outwards. If he managed to achieve this Alan would admire him, and his company would be worth more.

Alan wondered what the war had meant for the other prisoners, and for the men on the battlefields. What change had it made in them? The prisoners strode aimlessly round the court-yard. During the war they had been together and worked together and many of them had been happy. The pilots had been happy. They had felt that they belonged to a united body, moving consciously ahead in pursuit of something worth having. It was not necessarily political freedom or patriotism, or any of the proclaimed aims, but there was something which men who were fighting experienced in common. Now it had gone. He was aware himself of this lost unity, this fire that had been extinguished. Where could it be recovered? The war had given men back their fellowship in order to confront their death. He wanted the same kind of fellowship in order to confront life. He could and would often have to advance alone, and could be happy in his solitude, but he didn't want it for ever. Fellowship was as natural as solitude. It shocked him to think how strong was the lure of fighting. As nations grew rich and successful the individuals in the nation drew away from one another and farther from the creative jobs. They became distributors, agents, accessories, and the springs of

life seemed to cease rising through them. Along came a war and many of them saw a chance to unseal the emotions and recover the experiences which had forsaken them. A purpose appeared. They made sacrifices on one another's behalf: all this, like the inventions of scientists, in order to destroy one another.

He believed that the communists could help to restore the great impulses without stoking up a war. Communism was only another of those voices which from time to time recall those who have gone crooked and flat to the natural and profound feelings, freedom, brotherhood, adventure, faith in life. There might be many other voices, whose echoes were not heard so insistently in the castle, but communism was the voice he heard, and could scarcely fail to hear in that position, at that moment. He wished that the others could hear it also.

But their senses were not at all acutely keyed. They would go home, hoping many of them to huddle round their own slow fires, and he was afraid they would gradually turn inward upon themselves. He wanted to bring together the dying embers and fan a new blaze. Jim's fire had nearly gone out entirely. His own had burnt low at one time; while he was talking to Jim he had had the impression that he was trampling on a part of his past. It was for people to stop shrinking. No, no, no, they said, though they would like to say yes. It meant national as well as individual suicides. Nations in which the people were afraid or on the recoil spiritually might as well die; they might as well borrow Jim's razor and get it over.

So he became an evangelist. This was his new stage. He could be very serious, with a plodding intensity and conscientiousness that made Geoff Larkin laugh at him.

'You'll get in such a mess,' Geoff told him. 'You're trying to reconcile innumerable opposites. One day you're full of ideas, and the next day you can't be seen for statistics. A little while ago you were all dreams, it was rather pleasant. Now you're fussing about how to put them into practice. What is going to become of you next?'

'What do you suggest?'

'Yogi is very fashionable. Somehow I don't see it getting a grip of you, but if the war goes on another year there's no knowing. Are you still going into business?'

'Yes. As soon as I'm out of the army.'

'I think you'll probably become one of those enlightened employers in the north of England who build model villages and take the plate round in church. I've never cared for them myself. There's something rather smug about that dismal non-conformist conscience. I'm just a little afraid you might develop it.'

'You're very concerned about my future.'

'My dear Alan, I am interested in people. You have imagination and feeling. I shall watch their progress. You are also disagreeably practical, and that may be your ruin, because it may mean your career is a success. Now I am not at all practical, and I shall certainly not be a success. It is the penalty.'

And he sighed and looked exceptional. He pretended not to care about success, but really he had a devouring ambition to arrive. He couldn't wait. He never sat back, never seemed to absorb. Art had become a duty with him.

About the beginning of October Alan went to Morshead.

'You've got to give a lecture,' he said. 'Several lectures. On communism.' He had said it before and forgotten to press it, in the excitement of the invasion, with the trouble about Jim coming on top of it. 'You persuade him, Marcus,' he said. 'Nobody here knows anything about it.'

'Yes, you must do it,' said Marcus. 'Come out of your shell. Geeve us' all the benefit of your great mind.'

Marcus was a little scared of Alan these days. Alan had told him about Jim and they had had a row. Alan told him Jim's remark: 'I was useful to Marcus as a specimen.'

'You work away on your own,' he said indignantly. 'You collect all this human material and then you shut yourself up with it. You do nothing to apply it, and while you're working out your theories someone's opened his veins or cut his throat. You're quite happy. You're a hermit.'

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'What could I do: How could I tell it would come to this?'

'If you couldn't tell, then your studies can't have been much use to you. I believe it's all a hoax.'

'It is a long work. I cannot reach conclusions at once.'

'You must have had some idea what was in Jim's mind.'

'And what about all the others in the castle: Am I to be nursemaid to them all?' Voice and eyebrows shot up. 'Am I to go round all the rooms each night to see if someone is committing suicide? What do you expect?'

'You should have done something with Jim.'

'What? He was stubborn.'

'He'd have talked after a little. You ought to have gone on.' Marcus shrugged his shoulders.

'Morshead's just the same,' Alan said. 'He locks himself up with his ruddy books and forgets what he's reading them for.'

'And what about you?'

'I'm only reading them because I want to apply them, and because there's nothing else to do in this place. Give me a chance to get into this new job at home, or any job, and you won't see me with these books again. I want something to do.'

'And what can I do now, please?'

'Get Morshead to give these lectures. He can fix them up with Ford. On Sunday afternoons is the best time. Ford's in charge of all that. He's in charge of everything now.'

Marcus looked slyly at Alan.

'You've changed a lot,' he said.

'I should hope so.'

'First you didn't know where you were. Now you're turning into a missionary.' He looked incredibly arch. 'I put it down to my influence,' he said and winked.

Morshead did not want to give the lectures.

'It's sheer waste of time,' he said. 'Most of the people in this castle are potential fascists. Look at Anstruther. Look at Martin and his pals. Give them a black shirt and they'd be happy as the day is long. Give Franklin a rubber truncheon and our life wouldn't be worth living. All these Europeans too. Laharpe for

example. And these Poles. They're like your pal Eulenstein. This castle is a fortress of the Right.'

'All the more reason to give lectures. You didn't mind giving them to me. I didn't know anything about these subjects, nor do they. You're the great light.'

'They know all right.'

'Not the young ones.'

'It'll be forbidden.'

'I don't think so. Three years ago it would have been. Not now. Times have changed. Anyhow, you can try.'

'Well, you ask Ford.'

'Do it yourself.'

Morshead looked surly and grumbled to himself. He disliked having anything to do with the castle authorities. The lectures would interrupt his own work. But finally he went to Ford and made his suggestion.

'How many do you want to give?' Ford asked.

'To do it properly it would need at least ten. I could condense it to five.'

'Five? That's rather a lot. Five lectures on communism. Could you make it three?'

'It'd be very sketchy.'

'Never mind. Just to give us an idea, you know. Personally I shall be most interested.' He dropped his voice. 'I'm just thinking about the foreigners here. You know they're not . . . well, not exactly sympathetic to communist ideas. One doesn't want to hurt their feelings unnecessarily. They've been through a great deal and of course most of them are depending on us and America to save Europe from the Russians. Laharpe is quite worried.'

Laharpe was getting disconcerting news from home. At the time of the invasion, like all the other French, he had been jubilant and proud. Now he began to learn of arrests. Royalists had been put in gaol for long sentences. The German papers said that France was rapidly sinking into red chaos. Laharpe laughed at first, but lately he had become anxious and talked of setting out on his travels again. Others less conspicuous than Laharpe were

beginning to realize that things in the world outside were going to be very different. 1939 might have been B.C. Citadel after citadel of their inherited beliefs was either yielding or being fortified.

One of the Serbs, who had fought for Mihailovich, and did not know that Alan was a friend of Morshead's, said to him:

'I hear there are to be lectures on communism. It is dangerous.'

'Why dangerous?'

'You English do not understand. It is a menace to you. You are too good natured, too easily taken in. Already it is trying to ruin our country.'

'Will you go back there?'

He shrugged his shoulders. 'They may not allow me. Or they would allow me and shoot me when I got there. They are saying already that people like me have not been anti-German enough. It is the same with these Poles. Have you spoken to them? I had my business in Belgrade,' he said defiantly. 'I could have collaborated with the Germans, but I did not. I fought them. They have killed my wife and children. Six months I was in a Gestapo gaol, and now I hear that I have not been anti-German enough. It appears I should be more elastic.'

'You can see how awkward it might be,' said Ford. 'I shall have to see the Brigadier.'

'Talks on communism?' said the Brigadier. 'Why not? It's a free castle.'

'I thought some of these Europeans might not like it, sir,' said Ford.

'Why? Morshead's going to talk about England, isn't he?'

'Yes, sir, but . . .'

'Not about Polish communism, or Greek communism, or Hottentot communism, eh?'

'No, sir, but . . .'

'Nothing to worry them, then. Fix it up. Tell 'em to have a seat kept for me.'

So three dates in November were provisionally reserved.

'If we're here,' said Ford. 'The war's on its last legs.'

'If we're here,' said Alan, remembering that he had laid a bet about Christmas.'

'If we're here,' said everybody, fascist, communist, Jew, Gentile, all creeds, all races, including German. 'There can't be another winter in this place. There can't be.'

But gradually it dawned on them that there would be another winter and that they had been let down again. No, it had once been said, there would be no war; yet the war had started. Never mind, it can't last more than a couple of years; but it had lasted. Don't worry, the Germans are short of oil and will crack internally; but they were not short of oil and they had not cracked internally. Very well, the landing in Italy or the landing in France will finish it; but neither had finished it. Home at Christmas this year, anyhow, they had said; but the damp leaves fell again, and the sentries kicked them into heaps on the battlements, and ice collected on the windows and in the broken basins, and winter 1944 began, one of the hardest Europe had known for many years. It dragged itself on with unfathomable weariness and dreariness, like an unwanted burdensome old man. It was as oppressive as a summer gone stale, and it had the cloying decay and dungeon damp of autumn without the colours or the wind and sun. It was just cold, white, clinging, unforgiving. The days, inside the castle, were as dark as the North Pole. Fog and mist billowed along the passages, and rubbed the walls of rooms like enormous ghosts of cats. The prisoners could not keep their socks or their boots dry. It was always cold underfoot, and wet in the court-yard, and the cold and wet came through. They made slippers out of old uniforms to cover their wet boots. They slept badly, piling their clothes on top of them, and sewing their blankets together to make sleeping-bags. The coal ration was cut by nearly half, and they herded into the bigger rooms by day to keep warm, leaving the rest of the castle without fires.

They began to think that the war was being deliberately prolonged to spite them. The Germans carried out every regulation meticulously, never yielding, and the prisoners, venting their impotent disappointment, supposed that they were doing it on

purpose. The Sneak padded round the rooms at night, peering into cupboards and shining his torch into the sleepers' faces. Never had his pretence at being affable irritated them more.

'*Guten Abend, meine Herren,*' he murmured, softly opening the door. 'So the Rhine is not yet crossed. What did I tell you?'

The Germans brought it home that prisoners were men of no importance. They refused everything. Electric light bulbs, new taps, plumbers to mend the pipes . . . impossible. Everything was wanted for the war, and the prisoners were out of the war, out of life. Nothing seemed to work at this stage. The matches would not strike. The knives would not cut. The string always broke. Everything was a substitute, everything was a symbol of a country living and now dying beyond its means. If the Germans in the castle now carried out their orders with greater rigour and unpleasantness, it was probably because they were now being ruled with greater rigour and unpleasantness. It seemed that the wickedest men the world had ever known had taken charge. The Poles who reached the castle in November had the most horrible stories of massacres and torture that Alan had ever heard. The prisoners had relied on some kind of gentlemanly protection from the German Army and hoped vaguely that von Grednitz would not allow them to come to harm. Suddenly they realized that they were in the hands of Himmler. A report of one of his recent speeches reached them. 'I shall support all but the hesitant,' he had told his underlings. 'I am accustomed to being obeyed. If you exceed your orders and use more violence than is necessary I shall support you.' Some British officers escaped from a camp near by. They were recaptured and shot without trial; it was unusual for this to happen to Englishmen, and officers at that. Hitler disappeared from the public eye for several weeks. A rumour going round Germany reached the prisoners, that he was too squeamish to take the steps Himmler thought necessary; in other words, the arch-fanatic was now a moderate.

Alan used to wonder what could be the mood of the leaders, that made them go on. The people were stupefied and so

organized that they had no time to think or question, and they were terrified of the secret police. But the leaders . . . ? Perhaps they knew that they were doomed themselves and didn't care what happened to anyone else, provided they could have a few more weeks of power; that was what the British propaganda said. He thought that some of them might still really believe in victory. He had seen the effects of doctrines which had been drummed into them for years, and many Germans, he felt certain, really could not imagine that these doctrines were going to be defeated. Their own vanity was so deeply, so colossally involved. The Leader had declared himself a god, and a god cannot think himself fallible, because of his vanity. Millions had taken all their ideas, all their standards, from him, had preached them, abandoned themselves to them, and could not face the thought of their collapse, because of their vanity. In the same way Simon Dempster could not really face the thought of losing his position, no more than Count Eulenstein, nor Bill Franklin the thought of losing his money, because their selves were erected upon these foundations, because of their vanity. There were Germans so vain that they would rather die in an orgy of catastrophe and self-pity than admit that they had been wrong; like Jim Irving at his worst moments, they cherished the disaster they had brought upon themselves. They were so vain that they preferred death impenitent to life penitent. Alan believed that there were many like this, and not only in Germany, after all; it was quite a common trait.

Times would change. A generation might arise that would think this last stand of the Germans had been heroic. The leaders had that in mind, hoping to create a legend. To Alan, who was not bitterly anti-German, the end was sordid and horrible, and he hoped that all who saw it in that way would write it down, so that posterity might make no mistake. The young and fit sentries left for the front. They were determined if possible to be taken prisoner. Old men who scarcely knew how to hold a rifle took their places and wandered along the battlements, rubbing the sleep out of their eyes and suddenly loosing off a

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round or two. The *Volksturm* was enlisted to defend the Fatherland, and all civilians between sixteen and sixty were compelled to join. Photographs of them appeared in the newspapers, listening to the generals and police chiefs, duped, apathetic, the younger ones with that terrible herd delight in destruction and self-destruction. Night after night Alan heard them under the castle walls, marching off to long exercises in the cold and the dripping mists, singing songs and blowing bugles. The obituary columns were crowded out, the relatives announcing sometimes that the men had been killed for Germany, sometimes — less often now — for Germany and the Fuehrer, sometimes just that he had been killed. These notices had a macabre dignity. One day Alan recognized a name.

With an unspeakable grief comes to us the almost
unbelievable news that our only joy,
our husband, son, father,

LUDWIG BOHLE

Born Jan. 16, 1915 Died Sept. 12, 1944
has fallen on the east front and lies there far from
his home

In the name of the relatives:

Marthe Bohle, Irmgard Bohle (born Freiwalder),
Heini and Gretchen.

Castle House, Durheim.

It was the young man who lived in the white house. Alan had watched its life for nearly four years. He had seen the two children growing up. The women had gone from room to room dusting and making beds. The man had come back on leave and they had all been happy and excited. Nazi banners had been piously hung from the windows on the correct days. He had seen the old woman taking her walk under the cherry trees, always in black, and he had seen the daughter-in-law in the train, gazing out of the window, with her blue eyes and complexion of soft bronze. Now he saw the two women in black and a window with the blinds drawn down, and the house was dead.

YES, FAREWELL

The whole country was in mourning. No theatres now, no orchestras, no music in the foodless cafés, very few shops and those almost empty, no free conversation; nothing but deadness and mists and cold and this slow drag towards ruin. The prisoners thought of their friends and brothers fighting to reach them, and end it all, in the snow and the rain. They heard of battles which sounded almost fabulous to them, in which tanks ploughed their way like prehistoric monsters through enormous forests. Thousands had still to die in this senseless finale. In every letter they read of the loss of friends, Brian Clyde among them: he had been killed in Normandy in July.

And now the food in the castle began to give out, and the prisoners to behave like animals. The dreaded early days of their captivity had returned, and the end was to be worse than the beginning. In early November they still ate fairly well. Alan's mess, thriftily run by Harry Ferguson, had two pieces of bread and margarine in the morning with jam or marmalade thinly spread; vegetable soup, or kohl rabbi or turnips, with one potato and a slice of bread and cheese for lunch; the same for tea as for breakfast, and for dinner probably a little meat with vegetables and a cake made out of breadcrumbs. They were not badly off for tea and cocoa and sometimes they had coffee. They had reserves of Red Cross parcels, though the parcels were no longer arriving, and cigarettes which they could trade with the German sentries. One or two, like Fisher and Fell, knew girls in the town, who kept them supplied. The sentries were liable to the death penalty, but they traded regularly. Sex and commerce were stronger than nationality. Rudi came into his own with his farm along the valley. He went off on his bicycle, more secretly now, and brought back flour, eggs, loaves of bread. He asked a pretty stiff price for them. He was more than ever worried about his wife, who was pregnant but still compelled to remain in the city, bombed now almost nightly.

By December reserve stocks of food were exhausted, and cigarettes, too, were running out. The doctor calculated that they could live on the dwindling German rations, doing no work,

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for six months without serious danger; but every day now they were really hungry. The cold became more intense and their resistance was weak. The temperature stayed steadily below zero, and they woke up four or five times in the night from the cold, feeling that blocks of ice had been placed against their limbs. They put their fag-ends carefully away in tins. They pared the turnip peel and made a dish out of the parings. They went back to their bunks after the dawn parade and many of them stayed there until midday. Nobody took exercise now, because it sharpened the appetite. They pinched and scraped, and not a crust could be wasted. About the same time all mail from home was stopped because of the operations in France.

There was hardly a man not suspicious or suspected, hardly a man who was not constantly on edge. Alan learnt soon that many of them behaved very honestly; yet he was left with an overwhelming memory of animals, obsessed with trivialities, enslaved by their bellies, unable to trust one another. Calm voices became querulous, querulous voices shrill. Those who tried to remain dignified and unruffled and urbane were the most exasperating. They were always apologizing. They apologized if they passed someone on the stairs or brushed against someone in a food queue. They were so anxious to keep up their good manners that it became a kind of mania. Often, after days of this forced unnatural politeness, the façade collapsed, and they gave way like the others to angry recriminations, outbursts of spite, accusations of dishonesty. Latent antipathies rose hissing to the surface and sometimes there were fights.

The sentries now became the chief source of food, other than the German rations. A control had to be established to regulate trading with them. Major Ford, with a host of employees, took charge of it. He made a flying start, issuing strongly-worded decrees, and threatening offenders with severe penalties. Official traders were appointed and the prices in cigarettes were fixed. It was felt that a firm hand had charge.

'It'll be no good,' Morshead said. 'Either do it thoroughly or not at all. He should pool all cigarettes. If he doesn't, the rich

messes will benefit as soon as cigarettes get really short, people will start rackets and the price control will be bust.'

No one listened to him, because he was an economist, talking from a book and rather cranky, but most people expected he would be right, from common sense. He was right. The rackets began, the prices rose. The castle became an anthep of whispers. In the corridors, in the dark corners, were little groups, all whispering. If anyone approached they stopped, waited till he had gone, and then began again, whispering. Friends gave up trusting one another. Nobody could be certain who was trading illegally, who was breaking the control; and so everyone was on the watch. Accusations of dishonesty grew and grew, and could never be traced, and never proved or disproved. The Brigadier was pestered out of patience with complaints.

'The potatoes I am receiving are not as large as the potatoes Major So-and-So's mess are receiving. . . .'

'We are always given the top off the soup, which isn't fair, because the vegetables are all at the bottom. . . .'

Yet these were very important matters, far the most important in the whole castle, and took a long time to discuss and decide. The faces of the prisoners, as they waited for their soup, were like the faces of huskies waiting to be thrown scraps; each had his eye on the other, and it was an art to come forward at the right time.

Fred Martin and his friends were very powerful, because Fred was an official trader. He had the whiphand of men who once despised him for being rowdy. Bill was always taking him aside and whispering, and Alan knew that he must be doing private deals; Bill was a big man, with a big appetite, and hunger made him very ill-tempered.

At night Fred and his friends huddled round the stove.

'Something ought to be done about the spuds,' complained Peter Wade. 'See Anstruther's mess to-day? I reckon theirs were twice as big as ours.'

'No wonder. One of their men issues them.'

'It's a bloody scandal. None of the rest of us ever gets that job.'

'What I want to know is who's putting the price of eggs up,' said Fred.'

'Not only eggs. I reckon it's bread too. The whole control's busting.'

'What can you expect, with Ford running it?'

'Why, he's straight enough.'

'Straight? I wonder.'

'Time he admitted it was a failure.'

'Too proud.'

'Time we bucked the control completely. I'm sick of playing with it. Some have already.'

'Some? Christ! Dozens. It's all right for the messes with plenty of cigarettes.'

'They should all be pooled,' said Alan.

'Who the hell would agree to that, except the blokes that haven't got any? It won't work, Alan,' Fred said.

'It should be an order.'

'Force, eh?'

And so it went on, until midnight or after, when heavy footsteps were heard along the passages, and Rudi or one of the sentries would appear with a bulging coat, and Fred slipped outside to negotiate.'

One day Major Ford sent for Alan.

'I've got a job for you, Maclaren,' he said. 'You know the black market is centralized now. We're having trouble with men busting it. I've warned them three times, but it's still going on, and we can't lay our hands on them without a special watch. I want you to take charge of my information service.'

'Of your what, sir?'

'It means you'll have to report anyone not authorized to trade and any traders not handing their stuff into the pool. Of course, I don't want you to spend a lot of time following people. But just keep an eye open.'

'What a job!'

'I know. But if you can't trust people, there you are.'

'I'd rather not.'

YES, FAREWELL

'I'm afraid you must.'

'Why not call it spying?'

'Call it what you like. It's become necessary.'

'Couldn't you choose someone else?'

'No, you're the man. You work all the time and nobody would suspect you. Also you're supposed to be honest.'

'So are lots of people.'

'I've engaged most of them already.'

'What about Morshead?'

'Morshead? He hardly has the finesse. We've decided on you. I'm sorry, but there it is.'

'Can I think it over?'

'Perhaps I can put it to you like this. You're working and that keeps you occupied. You're not involved in the bickering and back-biting. I sympathize with your wish to detach yourself, but we all have our responsibilities, you know.'

Certainly Ford was not evading his. His table was covered with files and papers. He might have been in an office at home. Heads were continually popping round the door . . . Major Ford? . . . I'll be free later . . . Alan wondered what he found to do. Ford was still mysterious, still writing things down in code.

'We all have our responsibilities,' he repeated, smiling. 'We can't cut ourselves off entirely. I'm sure you'll agree.'

Alan thought, he is saying exactly what I said to Marcus about Jim, and to Morshead about his lectures; you can't shut yourself up.

'It's strange, in a civilized community,' he said. 'A few individuals can make crooks out of all the rest.'

'Not, I hope, all the rest. We shall see.'

'And the so-called honest are appointed spies.'

'Spy is a harsh word. Your name will not come out, of course. You need not trouble about that.'

Alan tried another way out.

'I'm only a lieutenant,' he said. 'You want someone more senior to run a thing like this.'

Ford smiled winningly. 'We'll assume you have the rank you

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would have had if you were not a prisoner. And don't worry about your work. You'll have plenty of time for that still.'

So there it was. Alan found himself at the centre of the whispers. He saw civilized men under the stress of hunger. He became interested. His job was to lay the dishonest by the heels, but he looked for the honest too. The castle was like a bazaar, and honeycombed with rackets. He saw people fascinated, really fascinated by the trading, so that they could think of nothing else. Men who had done nothing since they were taken prisoner came suddenly into their own. And everywhere he came across the whispers, and the sidelong glances, and an air of grudgingness, and yet of anger, that human beings should have come to this.

IV

IN that nervous rather poisoned air it was hardly the time for Morshead to give lectures on a subject that might provoke more rage and more spite. The prisoners wanted consolation. They did not want to be reminded that life outside was hard also. However, it was a way of passing the time, and they had heard so much about communism that they were curious to know what Morshead meant. Also it had become known that Colonel Anstruther would reply to him. More than two hundred turned up to listen.

Morshead spoke on three afternoons in the big room overlooking the village. Scouts were posted by Major Ford to give warning of the Germans. The best seats were in the centre, round the stove; the senior officers sat in packing-case chairs in front. Most wore greatcoats.

Morshead was not impressive, though he spoke lucidly, unfolding his argument like a narrative. He was hardly taller than the pulpit, which was used as a desk and on which he put the familiar pile of dull books. His ferret eyes peered through spectacles at the audience, and he spoke with few gestures and few inflections. He was a drab figure, reminding Alan of boys

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whom he used to look down on at school, because they didn't play games and spent their time in study.

He summarized many of the things that he had talked about to the soldiers. Alan didn't feel it to be heroic or stupendous or new. Morshead told them what Marx had meant by communism or socialism and how it had been put into practice in Russia. He said it was absurd to imagine that what one man had said was going to do for everybody, or that what one country had carried out successfully ought to be carried out by all the others in exactly the same way. He took communism to mean a society not split by economic classes, a society in which the people governed themselves and themselves owned its capital resources. He didn't think this stage would be reached for a long time to come, but that it was on the way. As it arrived it would take different forms in different places. The future might flow over them molten and fiery, or slow and cautious; however it came it could not help receiving some imprint from the past, and much of the past could not help dissolving under it. Separate countries and separate individuals would enter it, and receive it, and pass it onward, in their own ways. Huge movements began with new names, which swept the world, but at their source was always a desire for liberty. People might formulate this desire in a rigid manner, but it was bound to be liquefied and transmuted. It was not to be arrested. Very often, both in individuals and in nations, the creative and constructive motions had been perverted and the craving for liberty had become an instrument of slavery. Now, we should be sensible enough and have suffered enough to avoid it happening again.

He explained to them how a planned society might emerge in England, and what might come of it, and why he thought it would be necessary. He gave reasons of justice, and also of immediate need. England could no longer afford to be casual and haphazard. She would want all her strength, and a mass of strength was still dormant in the people. We had lost many of our old assets, but this was not a disaster. A moment had arrived, if ever such moments did arrive, to start again. The

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export trade had to be built up, a characteristic of a young country. New plant had to be introduced, new methods of business, new inventions. . . .

While Morshead was conversing like this, the cold sun filtered through the clouds and shone whitely on a row of houses. It plated the peeling window frames and turned the khaki a soft yellow. The many faces, leaning forward, were bathed in thin light and Laharpe's lustrous black hair gleamed like magnesium wire. Morshead reminded Alan of Brian Clyde. The world was such a jungle that there had to be these one-track minds to push a way through it, without variety, without relaxation. Brian had once talked about holidays on the Broads, sailing, walking out to the bird islands at low tide. And now he had been killed, leading a charge no doubt, doing his duty; and here was Morshead, steeled, analysing, doing his duty. The sunshine wavered across the houses and the fields, lassoing the scattered farms. Adventure, love, happiness, were out there. . . .

And Morshead went on, beginning to speak now of nations. He said that the real task was to extract the riches of nature. The world was still extremely poor. Redistribution of income would certainly not give people what they wanted. It could achieve very little. What was needed was to enlarge the total income, and that could only be done by drawing out the power hidden in and under the earth, in the sea, and in the air, and harnessing it to serve us. Once it had been the plough in the fields, the axe in the forests, the huntsman and the fisherman. Now it was the furnace, the aeroplane, the shipyard, the power station, the laboratory. Slowly, minute by minute, discoveries of this kind were increasing men's leisure and giving them the chance to lead the fuller life, of which still very few had any experience, and not many any conception, but for which all had the instinct.

The fight to extract the riches of nature had been fought in the Western countries by a long series of brilliant individual sallies. The so-called industrial revolution had brought immediate gain to a small number of people, and had enriched the whole world much more slowly. Until the twentieth century

Russia had stayed far behind in this advance. She was now making her own enormous contribution, but communally, as a whole, according to a plan, in which the gap between the reward to individuals and the reward to society was less glaring than it had been in the Western countries. Her great concentration of effort, made during our lifetime, had been at the expense of personal liberty, as understood by ourselves. But was ours really liberty? The Russians had not felt its absence acutely themselves. Their horizon for achievement was still immense. Human beings, like animals, do not think they are tied if they have not yet come to the end of their tether. And in England, before the war, there had been a strong sense of restriction; many people had felt the tug of the rope. The days were past when the accidental enterprise of individuals, which had once worked such wonders, could satisfy us. The lack of communal energy and enterprise had made itself known. It was only against some human enemy, and in war, that the country really became united; in work, in the peaceful adventure against nature they were not united. There were classes, economically though not bitterly opposed. It stood to reason that our efforts to enrich ourselves would succeed more if they were not divided. It was a pity that a people like the British, still vital, still inquisitive, still inventive, had never yet been able to bring all their strength whole-heartedly together, except for the primitive purpose of self-defence.

Fisher, Evans and Fell were sitting all together on a bench, wedged in the audience. Evans was listening off-handedly. He knew the socialist theory. He had heard it from his father. He folded his arms at times and looked out of the window, as if he wanted all these people to understand that he did know it all. Fell was chewing gum. Fisher was following every word, his legs crossed, his folded hands rested on them. There was something weak and hopeless, not about him personally, but about his position and attitude there and at that time; and Alan was aware of the overwhelming forces, active or merely ignorant, which were accumulated against him. Marcus was in a corner

somewhere, half asleep, but taking it in. Simon Dempster's eyes were closed; he came to these lectures for a snooze and to make the time pass. Bill Franklin sat back against a wall, his hands dug into his pockets, his jaw stuck out. Harry Ferguson looked bewildered, trying to understand. Colonel Anstruther was in front, in one of the arm-chairs; now and then he took a note.

Morshead explained to them on a blackboard a possible plan to socialize the coal-mines. He wanted to prove that he was practical, not all theory, and when he came to the mines he knew what he was talking about, because he had been born and lived on the fringe of them. He ended up by saying:

'The artists and the thinkers and the scientists have a similar idea of life. They want peace, like most people, but not a passive peace. They want peace in order to explore and to create. Society seems to lag behind them, and we often hear it said that such-and-such a man was far ahead of his times. They would all like to convert the rest of the world to their general vision. The artists and writers can only do it very slowly; it is seldom that a book, however great, impels people to take action immediately. The scientists are much more powerful. Any great book is bound to have in its heart many ideas which the writer has absorbed from others and brought together himself in his own way. The same is true of a scientific invention. But these inventions, unlike writings and creations of art, can alter almost overnight the material conditions under which people live, so that, whether people like it or not, they are bound to take some action. A few men invent something, and the rest have to adapt themselves. Their ideas are changed.

'In the last century the railways were invented, and many new sources of power were discovered, and factories were built and developed these new sources. Production was on a larger scale, and people's ideas became enlarged. In this country, for example—I mean Germany—dozens of little frontiers collapsed. Petty sovereignties were surrendered or swamped and merged into a bigger, more concentrated unit. This process is continuing. The scale of production is continuing to expand.

Inter-communication is improving, and people are taking less and less time to travel greater and greater distances. The units of power are becoming larger and fewer. If we are to believe the German papers, the nazis intended, if they won the war, to sweep away all the frontiers of Europe, as Bismarck swept away the frontiers of pre-Imperial Germany. The Japanese had the same kind of idea for the Orient. Hitler was to have met the Mikado in Delhi and two gigantic blocks were to have been set up. In the past the British had the same kind of idea for India. It is "conquest for peace". Go on conquering, until you have imposed your will everywhere; and then there is quiet.

"The Germans and Japanese have not been going against the age in entertaining these vast conceptions. It is the spirit in which they interpret them which is antiquated and a throw-back to more savage times. Underneath the conflicts of nations and of people there are certain forces, changing with changes in man's command over nature, which cause everyone to think in roughly similar terms. Whatever our nationality or political outlook, we are all thinking now in terms of great blocks. The trouble with the Germans and the Japanese is that they are still dreaming of empires when more enlightened people have moved on to talk about commonwealths. They are planning for conquests, when others are hoping for fusion.

"The greatest thinkers have always been above frontiers, and so they have been ahead of their times. But now the frontiers are beginning to be dissolved in fact. Commerce crosses and recrosses them, whatever efforts may be made to contain it. Aeroplanes fly over them at great speeds. This war may still produce inventions which will cause fortresses and defended lines and bases to look ridiculous. The inevitable conclusion, in theory and in fact, is the old idea of a world joined, one country. It has been a vision of artists and thinkers for centuries, because in whatever age they are born they are always aspiring to perfection. Now execution is at last catching up with imagination, because what has been imagined is being forced on people; the inventors have made it so. It will be a long time before we

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arrive at such a state, but it is now within the range of ordinary men's thought. There is greater respect all over the world for those who were once thought visionaries and optimistic cranks. In Russia the intelligentsia are highly paid. Informed men are thought much of in America. Even in England, the imaginative, the students, are beginning to be listened to with attention, and it is possible that large numbers of them will one day be elected to our Parliament.

'I imagine that we shall first see a merging of nations into coalitions of nations. This will be the danger point. These coalitions may be no more than coalitions of classes. If the class structure subsides the frontiers will subside; if not, they will be fortified. Also, after this war, as after the last, the rich and privileged will fight to recover their positions. People change very slowly, learn very reluctantly. The Germans, even though they lose, will have put the clock back, because their invasions have made the invaded people extremely patriotic for the time being and given new life to the idea of national sovereignty.

'In a few months, not far from here, perhaps under these walls, the armies of Russia will be meeting the armies of America and the British Commonwealth. What will it be that meets? Will it just be three great countries? Will it be the East meeting the West? To me these armies represent ideas, and the ideas are not incompatible, but complementary.

'The fire of liberty passes from one country to another, often returning to those where it appears to have gone out. Between the wars, when it was being trampled out in central Europe, and burning very low in Western Europe and in America, the Russians started a new blaze. Whatever the wreckage their revolution caused, or the terror it aroused, or the opposite extremes that it provoked, none the less it gave hope to millions of people who might otherwise have despaired. They had somewhere to look. The fire has caught again in the places where it was dying, and the Western world is alive and awake again. This is one great historical achievement of the Russians; not the only one.

'The Germans write every day that sooner or later there is bound to be a war between Russia and the West. It is in the Germans' interest to say this, and to a logical mind plenty of evidence is to hand. I suppose I am too much on an abstract plane. But if the nations which are to free us will only carry out the ideas inherent and implicit in their present forms of government and attitude to life, they will not clash. They will merge and enrich one another, and sway onward, like two rivers joined.

'The Russians leapt the liberal revolution, and have gone straight to the socialist. Their country is being industrialized and coming abreast of the Western powers by a communal effort. Their idea is mature and their approach is deliberate. Their people are not mature. What people are? Many Russians are primitive; we have seen, we know. Perhaps the thoughts implicit in their society are as far ahead of ours as their people are economically behind ours. Calumniators say they have abandoned their ideals, judging from what evidence, relying on what studies I do not know. The Russians have made no such retreat. If they have not, then individual liberty is inherent in communism. It is the last stage, the objective. It grows out of the plan. The discipline is necessary in order to obtain the material necessities upon which individual liberty flourished in the West, to prevent relapse and to defeat old prejudices. The Russians had scarcely started when this war broke out. All the time they have been fighting. Armed war has made them, as it has made every country, highly centralized and intensely patriotic. But this does not mean that they have forgotten the impulses of the revolution.

'In the West the accent has been on the individual. The liberals gave us the slogan of self-government. Self-government in Parliament, in the Dominions and Colonies, in India, in the counties and in the towns at home. This has been the ambition, and we have not abandoned it. It has been very slow in coming. We talk about liberty in England. Do we dare to analyse it. We prefer catchwords, do we not? There is not yet self-government or individual liberty for all. In theory, yes; in practice, no.

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Economically, the people have been in chains, not free from want, not really able to raise their heads. None the less, contained in this idea of self-government, there is implicit the idea of a free society. It must mean that ultimately the people will control themselves.

'We have not got communal freedom or enthusiasm, and the Russians have not got individual freedom as we understand it. We are approaching freedom, as it were, casually, from the political end. They are approaching it by plan, from the economic end. Obviously the two are not incompatible. They have much to give one another; both have missions. We are approaching the same goal from opposite directions, according to our history and the character which circumstances have given us; the goal is a liberated society in which each individual can make the most of himself according to his ability.

'I doubt if I shall live to see what I want to see. But I know what it is. I want to see a surrender of classes to the community, and of the communities to the world, bringing the full force of human beings into the struggle with nature, which is our real task, instead of against one another.'

There was loud applause when Morshead had finished, though most of the audience had been rather bored with his last remarks. But it was obvious he had taken a great deal of trouble, and he had given them something to talk about. Colonel Anstruther was very polite. Alan had watched him during the lecture. He had listened carefully, shifting and fidgeting at times, and taking notes. During the last half-hour he had had his eyes shut.

'I enjoyed it,' he said to Morshead. 'Some of it I'm wholeheartedly in favour of. We certainly have to make the most of our resources, and many things were really in a disgraceful condition. I trust our friendship will not be affected by a few differences.'

'I didn't know you were friends,' Alan said to Morshead.

'He means he comes from the same part of England.'

'Where's that?'

'Forest of Dean. Do you know it? I was born there and I used

to teach there. Anstruther owns one of the collieries, and he's got a place there. A very fine place. Georgian. It's a very fine country, once you get into it, towards the Marches. Wild still. I'll show you one day. You're Cumberland, aren't you? I reckon they're a bit alike.'

'Did you know Anstruther well?'

Morshead grinned.

'He tried to stop me teaching there. I don't know if you'd call that knowing him well.'

'I did so hope you'd say something about the black market,' said Simon Dempster. 'Don't you think it would be a marvellous argument for communism?' Charming, friendly, he moved away. Alan heard him in the distance: 'Awfully good, wasn't it? I never dreamt he could speak so well. I always thought him just a little . . . well, *trying* . . .'

For two or three days the rooms buzzed with arguments. Morshead's talks ran food and racketeering close.

'You're famous!' Marcus exclaimed. 'Make the most of it. Get yourself asked to meals. You spoke very well, my dear. Not enough gestures. A leetle more variety . . . but you were good.'

Morshead grunted. He was backing into his shell again. When the excitement had died down, a few officers and two more soldiers came to see him 'privately, by night', and said they would be interested to hear more. They joined the discussions.

Hostility came out of its corners. One high officer forbade anyone in his regiment to discuss communism at all, and accused Morshead of fermenting a mutiny. An inquiry was made about his civilian job. In one of his lectures he had spoken indiscreetly about the crisis in Greece, where British soldiers were at that time fighting in Athens against the Greeks. Morshead had said that it was a scandal and that British soldiers were being killed in a false cause; several people had approached a lawyer in the castle to ask if Morshead could not be prosecuted for sedition.

Often, when nerves were frayed, a prisoner would blame some accident on Morshead, or in an obscure way link him with it. Among a few, there was a kind of yearning to prove him dis-

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honest. Remarks made quite a long time afterwards showed how deep his shafts had sunk. He was rather fond of chocolate and made a legitimate deal in it.

'I see the communists have cornered the chocolate market,' Bill Franklin said. 'You notice Morshead messes with that Jew. He's one of the biggest racketeers in the camp. I bet Morshead does pretty well out of it.'

But most people didn't worry. After a few days Morshead was forgotten and the background closed round him again. The lack of food was much more important. The lack of food, and the news. . . .

In the middle of December the Sneak hurried exultantly into Alan's room.

'It's started!' he cried. 'I told you so.'

'What's started?'

'The offensive in the West, of course.'

'You seem very pleased.'

'Of course I'm pleased. Marshal von Runstedt's in command. We've put in fifteen divisions. Now you'll see.'

Alan's heart sank. It was true. When everyone had been saying that the Germans were finished, and thinking of a Christmas reunion, a German army was suddenly slung through the allied positions in the Ardennes. The cynics triumphed. Any doubts that the worst always happened were dispelled again. Damp mist squeezed through the windows and the Hitler youth marched shouting 'across the bridge, while the Sneak smiled and smiled.

'Yes, it has been a surprise, has it not? We're ready for a long war. We shall come back. A year... two years... who knows?'

The prisoners knew this counter-offensive couldn't succeed. They also knew they wouldn't be free that winter . . . perhaps not spring . . . early summer . . . it would be Alan's fifth year. Sometimes it really seemed that war — not *the* war, but war — would go on for ever. Men seemed to have habituated themselves to it; endless war and endless winter, a steady atrophy stealing up the limbs of the world like the effects of hemlock.

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The Germans began to talk about a secret weapon again. Elsa said that people in the village had suddenly taken heart. They really believed that their government had something up their sleeve. Secret researches had at last turned something out which would soon change everything in their' favour. There were weird rumours, alarming to the prisoners, who had the impression that there was something behind it. There was talk of a super-bomb, or a death-ray, which would annihilate the whole of London.

Rudi came up to Alan one day in the yard. He was pale and nervous.

'I'm going,' he said.

'Never mind. You'll have a good time in our prison camps.'

'It's not West. It's East again.'

'I thought you were ill.'

'It doesn't matter. Everyone's going.'

'When are you off?'

'To-morrow.' He pulled at Alan's arm. 'Here. Come here. He drew him into an alcove. 'You have this,' he said, dragging a loaf out of his coat. 'Keep it for yourself. It's a present. You don't have to pay. Now shake hands.'

They shook hands.

'You can get taken prisoner,' Alan said.

Rudi shrugged his shoulders. He was almost in tears. He darted his old look out of the alcove and walked away, shabby and disconsolate; and Alan saw the last of him, fallen in behind the file of soldiers, disappearing through the gate to fight for men he hated against others he did not hate.

Alan went on with his work for Ford, interested in spite of himself. He stayed at the centre of the whispering and watched for rackets. There were a good many, but most of them were small and it was difficult to trace them, and not worth while. The worst thing was the accusations. As people grew hungrier and colder, they suspected each other more and accused each other more. It was a nightmare at times. Honesty seemed to have disappeared. He read in the German newspapers about the

black market in Paris and Italy, in which Allied troops were taking part, and he wondered if the whole of civilization had been reduced to this; it was the apotheosis of *laissez-faire*. Alan learnt who were straight and who were crooked. He was curious about their motives. Simon Dempster was honest from disdain. He spent hours a day tidying up, and wherever he went remained clean and exquisite.

'I really feel I should be a trader,' he said. 'After all, I haven't been on the Stock Exchange for nothing. It's such a strain, though, making friends with the sentries. I never did have the common touch.'

Geoff Larkin also pretended to be above it all; but he took to arriving punctually at meals, and made himself a cake every ten days out of hoarded crusts, which he devoured alone, at dead of night, so that no one should know that thought was not enough for him. Harry Ferguson was honest for no particular motive; it seemed to come naturally to him. Morshead had trouble with Marcus, who traded all day, officially and otherwise. He had several sentries under his thumb; they knew he was a Jew and they turned to him naturally. He tried to wheedle food into Morshead's mess which should have been handed into the common pool.

'Where does this bread come from, Marcus?' Morshead said.

'Just a leetle present. It is nothing.'

'It's a loaf.'

'Just for once . . .'

'You'd better take it to Ford.'

'I could change it for chocolate,' Marcus insinuated.

But Morshead was adamant, and Marcus either had to hand it in or, preferably, munch it somewhere by himself, like a guilty schoolboy.

Johnson was the most successful racketeer, but nothing could be proved against him. He paid the sentries prices above the official level, and sold at a profit, and the rest of the castle went short. Indignation was expressed, but nothing could be brought home. The whispers multiplied. Even Ford was suspected. The

Brigadier refused to hear any fresh grievances. He was bored and disgusted.

'It's all right for him,' said Fred Martin. 'Old men aren't hungry.'

'He's a big fellow. I should think he's as hungry as a little runt like you.'

'Who's calling me a little runt?'

'I am,' said Peter Wade.

'You're not so big yourself. Anyhow, I don't go for all this about the Brigadier being a fine upright type and so on. It's easy enough not to racket if you're not hungry. I know he's not hungry. Old men's stomachs shrink. The M.O. told me.'

Hunger and cold told on Alan, as they had the previous year. Trivial mishaps jarred like a huge orchestra out of tune. His sense of the dark deserted him; he couldn't go along an unlit passage at night without knocking into walls and losing himself. Perhaps he had been working too hard, taking too much out of himself. It made him feel childishly frightened. He swore, and lost himself worse, and then had to laugh and talk, as he used to sometimes when climbing, in order to get his wits back. He felt a desire to blame someone, to hate someone, and concentrated it all on Bill Franklin. One day they were in the bathroom together. Morshead came in and by mistake took Bill's nailbrush. Morshead apologized.

'That's all right,' said Bill. 'It's your principle. What's mine's yours and what's yours stays yours. Communism my bloody foot.'

His tone was incredibly ugly and vindictive. He was torn apart, and there was the scratching beast, terrified for its possessions, spitting venom. Alan felt as Tug must have felt the day he hit Schulz. He wanted to hit Bill and afterwards he regretted having controlled himself. We're animals all right, he thought. All of us. He was sitting one night in a room alone. No one knew he was there. Simon entered in the dark and ran into a chair, hurting himself slightly; and suddenly there was a violent undamming of curses, and self-pity, and infantile helpless rage...

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'Oh, Christ . . . Jesus, Jesus Christ . . . F — bloody war . . . Oh, my God. . . .' It trailed away. Simon, the urbane, the courteous, the perfect gentleman.

Yet there were moments of serenity Alan had never known before; at night, when quiet music was played, or after the gramophone had been closed and others were sleeping, peace poured over him like a silver tide covering the cracked mud-flats of an estuary. Unexpectedly, in the daytime, these moments came. On one of the walls hung a photograph of Copenhagen. It showed a clean fresh city, with wide streets and canals, and steeples shining in sun-lit air, all rain-washed and yeldt-clear. To look at that photograph gave him the same sensation as when devout people look at holy images. Another time some soldiers were brought before the Brigadier for racketeering against the pool. Neither Fisher, nor Fell, nor any of those who came to Morshead's discussions, was among them. To Alan this was like an anchor; he had begun to wonder if he could trust anyone.

Most evenings he spent now talking with Jim Irving. Jim needed it, and he needed it himself. They unwound from inside themselves and there was a merging and strengthening of both. Jim was slowly recovering. The safety-curtain came down less often. He had begun to write absurd stories about the castle, like the one Tug and Alan had read on the escape. There wasn't much to them, but they came from Jim naturally, unlike the forced labours of Geoffrey Larkin. In one of them the old crone in the village, who did the prisoners' washing, became jealous of their expensive English clothes and decided to be revenged. She put a shrinking-powder in the water, and everything came back half-size. Colonel Anstruther's best underwear was ruined, and he insisted that the matter should be taken up by the British Government. In another story Major Ford went mad. He climbed to the castle roof with all his papers, including the prisoners' pay-sheets, and scattered them to the winds; then he made a nest among the chimneys and gave orders that he was not to be disturbed. These stories made Alan laugh. Jim was writing a revue now, to be put on in the castle's theatre; 'What we all want,' he

said, 'is to laugh.' Alan hardly recognized the wreck of a few weeks before. Larkin was going to do the backcloth; tired of the overdrawn landscapes and sketches in which he had tried to get rid of his resentful ambitious self, he thought he would like to try something purely imaginative.

It made a big difference to Alan, having someone to talk to. He liked especially to hear Jim talking about women and about love. He made them live for Alan as Tomavich had made history live, and Morshead had made politics and economics, and Count Eulenstein had made his great world of the past, and Fisher his own ambitions and struggle. Often at night, like many of the prisoners, Alan moulded the straw of his palliasse or pillow in the shape of a woman's breasts, passing his open hand and fingers caressingly over them, and murmuring in a soft voice. He never brooded now, as once he had, over his encounter with Jeanne. She might have thought him a fool then, and he might have behaved like one, but now it didn't matter. That phase, as Larkin would have called it, was finished.

Jeanne, and then the fiasco in Norway, those had been his thoughts once; the failure of himself and the failure of his world. He had swung over from the past to the future, from the negative to the positive, from the defensive to the initiative. He saw the life that he wanted as a joyous and fertile valley, to be reached, for him, through two passes; through contact with women and through work for his fellow men, the individual and the universal fusion. He would long remember, at Simon's supper party, how Laharpe and Morshead had talked about their different kinds of fulfilment, one with his body, the other with his mind. So many of the prisoners were going to be afraid of women and afraid of society, when they returned; and he, whose timidity had once been almost an obsession, found that he had lost it.

Dimly he saw a connexion between these two passes into happiness. Tomavich had once told him that people only become angry and disturbed about the state of the world because of some personal frustration. He had quoted students of his, who had run away to fight in a civil war in Spain, not because they cared

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deeply about the abstract cause, but because a disappointment or their own had driven them; and later they had forgotten all about the disappointment, and become troubled and active for mankind. His own sheltered boyhood had kept him away from life, making him shy with woman and ignorant about events, and then, when the shock came, resentful and brooding for a long while. But it had given him a sympathy with other men, who for other reasons had been excluded from the light and the sun. Tomavich, for example, and now Fisher. His desire for fullness for himself had become a desire for fullness for everybody, and his weakness had become his strength, and the key in the lock was turning, opening not only his own little door.

Alan was on friendly terms now with Johnson, who had been a great help to him; when he met his stepfather he would know a little about the job. Casually, he confronted Johnson one day with his suspicions about the black market.

'You've been busting the food control a good deal, haven't you?' he asked.

Johnson looked surprised.

'Who hasn't?'

'They say you do it more than anyone.'

'It's a farce, anyhow. If people want to bust it, they will. Why should I be left behind?'

'What's the answer, then?'

'There isn't one. Ford might have pooled all cigarettes in the first place. Then no one could have raised prices. But the richer messes would never have stood for that.'

'That's what Morshead suggested.'

'Morshead? Yes, I suppose he would. You're a pal of his, aren't you? You want to be careful of that. It won't do you any good to be seen going about with so-called Reds. Your stepfather won't like that. Of course, the personal relationship may make it different.'

'What did you think of Morshead's talks?'

'I'm looking forward to hearing Anstruther. He'll be more to the point. He's got a good deal more experience. That's the

trouble with folk like Morshead. All theory. Not that a lot of the things he said aren't true. I've heard most of it before. We had a lot of it up my way.'

'Where do you come from?'

'Newcastle. Things were pretty bad up there, so I got out. Yes, it's a nice idea all right, sharing everything and so on. I wish it were possible. The trouble is that people just don't behave that way.'

It was the last Sunday before Christmas 1944 when Colonel Anstruther made his reply to Morshead. He came to the pulpit in his famous overcoat, with a few notes and no books, bowed slightly to the Brigadier, and started off in a conversational, disarming voice. He made a couple of jokes to start with and told the audience he would not keep them long, which put them in a good mood.

He was not sure, he said, if a prison camp was a suitable place to talk politics. But since they had begun, he congratulated Morshead on the skill and clarity with which he had explained himself. Whatever might be thought of Morshead's opinions, at least he had stimulated them and given them something to think about. Morshead's sincerity could not be doubted, and he himself agreed in detail with some of the things Morshead had said, and in principle with more than half of them. Where Morshead had gone wrong, it was only through inexperience and the natural optimism of a young man who had perhaps not plunged very deeply into affairs. And, after all, it was a good thing to have some men who aimed at perfection. He would not like to be thought a cynic himself. Unfortunately, though, the world was a world of fact, and a great number of people had to find daily practical solutions to practical problems. If they were all to start thinking like Morshead, there would very soon be confusion.

It was interesting to hear what Karl Marx had written. So few had had the patience to read him. Many people were still under the impression that he was one of the famous comedians . . . Colonel Anstruther made room here for a little gust of laughter.

He was so much easier to listen to than Morshead. He had quite a manner, and people were leaning back, preparing to enjoy themselves. The three soldiers sat together again. Morshead was near Alan, looking grimly ahead of him. The snow lay thick outside and some bedraggled Christmas decorations had already been hung in the big room. Blue cigarette smoke struggled to the ceiling and made the eyes smart.

Colonel Anstruther continued.

It was very interesting, too, he said, to hear about the government and administration of Russia. No doubt there was a great deal to be studied there. We should always be prepared to learn from other countries, and that should not exclude our enemies. We could do worse, for example, than copy some of the examples set by Hitler and Mussolini. But we didn't want to get into the habit of damning our own country. It was very unlikely that Karl Marx, who after all, was a German Jew, with many of the German and Jewish weaknesses, could be a good guide to what was wanted in England. And the habits of the English were not the habits of the Russians, and never could be.

Everyone now was talking about plans. He would rather like to meet someone who had a plan to abolish plans. Couldn't they imagine how awful it would be to have their whole life organized? It had been bad enough in the war, but it would be ten times worse in peace, once some of those professors and professional social architects were let loose. Planned food, planned cities, planned ideas . . . everything to order and off the peg! Why, they would probably have to fill in a form in triplicate before they could have children.

The great charm of England was its accidental quality. To plan was to reverse a tradition which had made us the envy of foreigners. Our greatness and our liberty had just grown, like genius. It was quite unnecessary to plan. The old system of *laissez-faire* had done admirably in the past and had only to be adjusted in the light of researches into its maladjustments, such as had been made by Lord Keynes and Dr. Hayek. There was plenty of energy in England without overthrowing everything to discover

some imagined treasure buried in the people. The people were the last ones who wanted it. They were extremely conservative and quite happy to be left alone. It was rather mischievous of Morshead to pretend that a class conflict existed in England. There was nothing of the sort. Why, even during the General Strike, as no doubt they remembered, the soldiers had played football with the strikers. That couldn't happen in any other country in the world.

As for the new inventions and new methods of business which — as Morshead had said — were the chief agents of progress, and as for the export trade which everyone was talking about, they would be taken care of if only business men could be left to themselves. If they were to stay after the war saddled with extravagant wages, impeded by reactionary trade unionists and high taxation, their incentive to produce would disappear and the whole country would suffer. They were the makers of wealth, the people who extracted something from nothing. It was not for the State, however well-meaning, to interfere with them. Protect them, by all means, against the sweated labour and cheap costs of other less advanced countries. Interfere as little as possible. Control, certainly not. They had as much claim as the artists and other creative people to be left alone.

Morshead evidently had a high opinion of the Soviet form of government. He personally thought the Russians had done marvels in the war. It had surprised him, to tell the truth; he had expected them to be defeated. But after all it was not so amazing. They were doing what others were doing, defending their country, and they had all the advantages of dictatorial powers and a half-slave population of two hundred millions. Revolutions seldom kept their first pure purpose. How quickly the French Revolution had changed from a crusade to free mankind into an imperialist war! We should see with Russia. Already the worst trappings of Tsarism were returning. Peter the Great and Ivan the Terrible were the heroes now. Huge banquets were given by the government while the people lived still in poverty and anxiety. The high officers of the Red Army

kept up a state which had ceased to be possible for British officers generations ago. The ancient drive to the warm waters had been resumed with the ancient methods . . . cultivation of the Orthodox Church, pan-Slavism, pressure on Turkey. . . .

Colonel Anstruther repeated urbanely all the arguments which the prisoners had been reading in the German papers ever since Russia entered the war. The audience followed attentively. They felt that he was sensible and sound. Evans sat contemptuously with his arms crossed. Fell and Fisher sat together, not moving, listening. Outside, far away across the snow-covered hills, all round them, the terrible war was drawing to its close, and mankind's own tortures upon itself were ceasing, leaving their marks, their wounds and transfigurations. And Colonel Anstruther drew to his close:

'We cannot afford to be sentimental,' he said. 'It's very tempting to believe in these Utopian schemes, but they never have worked, and I'm afraid they never will. They're all a little too unpractical for me. We British are a practical nation. We have a healthy distrust of too clever people and imaginative systems. We jump our fences when we come to them. I am sure we all are grateful to Morshead for his ideas, and we admire the work he has put into them, and his personal sincerity. But we don't want to be carried away by fancies. We must remember that human nature is what it is, and we cannot change it.'

Alan scarcely heard. He seemed to know it all. He scarcely heard the applause, or Morshead, goaded at last out of his bitterness, raising his voice in indignant, uncontrollable protest, or the laughter that followed when Anstruther neatly turned the point. He went into the court-yard before the others came out and stood alone there in the cold air, breathing it in after the crowd and the voices and the tobacco smoke. The stars in the black sky were like notes of music and the court-yard was white with snow. He had recognized Colonel Anstruther. You are the devil, he thought, suave, reasonable, annihilating, telling us it is impossible. The evil one. The destroyer. *Ich bin der Geist der stets verneint*. That is who you are.

The others began to pour through the narrow archway, down the stairs, into the yard, talking and laughing. They were pleased, most of them, because Anstruther had told them things they wanted to hear. He had consoled them, in his way. There wouldn't be changes, nothing serious. No great effort would be asked of them, because there was no point. They would be free soon, and everything would go on easily, as it had always been.

Well, perhaps Anstruther was right. Right for him, and right for them. But not right for Alan, and that was certain. He had learnt at least what he believed in, and they couldn't touch it or reach it, because it was there now, inside him. At that final point none of them mattered. They were shadows, with rubbed grey faces, walking across their own shadows in the moonlight, under a single lamp. The great impulses for good might be perverted, and the magnificent hopes come to nothing again, but in the end his dream remained a vision, and for him it was the truth. If everything were destroyed, and only one man left, there would be a seed of good-will in that man and the struggle would begin again.

Fisher came bowling across the yard.

'Well, what did you think of it?' he grinned.

'He did it very well.'

'That's what I thought. Still, it's all the old stuff, isn't it? You can't change human nature and all the rest. Well, he should know. Speakin' for himself, I reckon.'

V

SUDDENLY, overnight, the castle's mood was transformed. Everybody changed. It was like the dust sheets coming off a chandelier.

On January 14th the Red Army launched a great offensive. They advanced as the gales used to come along the river valley, unthought of, concentrated, irresistible. Three weeks after leav-

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ing the Vistula they had reached the Oder. Famous cities and bristling fortresses collapsed in dozens. Provinces were swept away. In a week, East Prussia, half the soul of Germany, had been wrenched off. Silesia, Frederick the Great's India, evaporated in four days. Looking at night through the bars of the sleeping castle over the white snow-stiffened fields and the frozen river, Alan could hardly believe that this gigantic accumulation of power was really drawing near. It was as if the world was dying, and all were awaiting the arrival of a comet.

The armies of Marshal Zhukov and Marshal Koniev plunged at the heart of Germany. They brought millions the hope of an immediate physical release, and beyond, of infinite to-morrows of liberty. To the Germans and many others they brought terror. Never, at any other single moment in history, could such grim terror and such brilliant hopes have been awakened. People and things that had turned sour or stale, or grown too old or too weary, would be engulfed; and among the backwaters to be flooded, and the derelict places to be overwhelmed, would be the castle of Durheim.

The prisoners had always been at the mercy of events. That slow winter had almost destroyed them. The Russian onslaught brought them to life. They could not wait for the evening. When it came, they thronged into the big dining-room, and gasped as the news was read to them. Warsaw. Lwow. Graudenz. Oppeln. As unexpected as the news, and better because it immediately concerned them, was the arrival of food. The racketeering ended. They knew now that they would not starve. Early in February the winter weather, which they had thought would last for weeks, was miraculously broken. The river thawed, the air became mild and refreshing, and the sun poured in all day, filling their rooms like glasses of champagne. They were left with their last misgivings, that the German Government, in a final access of spite, would carry them off as hostages, dragging them from fortress to fortress, beyond reach of the liberating armies, towards the mountains in the south.

Not all of them were afraid only of the Germans. It had

dawned upon Alan who the Continentals were, and who the English were, with whom he was to spend the last few weeks of the war. A fortress of the Right, Morshead had called the castle. They were the world's conservatives. They despised the Germans and had fought the Germans with courage, risking everything and losing much, in order to defend their different countries. But consciously or unconsciously they had identified their countries with themselves and with the form of society which safeguarded their own privileges. Five years ago they had gone into the war on that account, as well as for honour and to resist aggression, as the cry had been. The conversion of the war between mere nations into a universal revolutionary war had carried off their original illusions, and they did not feel entirely easy about a rescue by the Russians.

The British could have waited with serenity, but for the Continentals it was different. The English were bruised; *they* were bludgeoned. Many of them knew that they would never be able to live at home, in Poland, Greece, Yugoslavia, under the coming as under the old régime. They had lost their families and their possessions. Men like Laharpe could not be certain even about France. The young might find opportunities which they had never been allowed to imagine. Some of the old might find oblivion, or adapt themselves. But the British did not have to consider their attitude towards the future so urgently. As ever, they were in a privileged position. They could pack their bags calmly and wait for the aeroplane or liner to transport them home, across the silver sea; and there they could carry out whatever the age demanded, at leisure, with the least possible shock to individuals. So they hoped, and doubtless it would turn out so. Colonel Anstruther would return to his directorships, Simon to his shooting and his dogs, Bill Franklin to his riches and his business; they would not be hounded by the clamour to decide or the need to flee. Fisher and Fell would return to the back streets; and from there, with Morshead in his way, and Alan in his way, and Jim possibly in his way, and any others willing, they would have to take part in a second liberation.

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During these huge events Alan stopped working, because he could not work. He wanted to do as little as possible. The war, which had been a stress and sometimes an ordeal, was finishing, and he wanted to watch and to witness. He wanted to get back his good spirits and his lightness of heart and liveliness. He watched the Germans. The castle belonged to a little village, not on the main roads, deep in the country, and he saw the conduct of the few minor actors he had always seen.

Ford's organization had fallen through completely. For a time Elsa continued to appear daily on the bridge, and gave the pre-arranged signals. She still sent Fisher her ill-spelt, incoherent notes. She told them that all the chief people in the village were preparing to leave. Those whom Ford had enlisted had got in touch with him in the belief that they would be conquered by the Americans or the British. They knew now it would be the Russians and all were preparing to go west.

The sentries were old, bewildered men, out to do a little trading, and then get away to their farms, while they still had time. For years, their masters had told them how terrible it would be if what was now happening were to happen, and the Russians were unleashed upon their Fatherland. Their wives and daughters would be raped and they themselves transported into Siberia. Photographs had been published of expected Russian retribution in East Prussia and Silesia, and many speeches calculated to frighten them and whip up their courage had been made. Now the propaganda had turned against itself. Torrents of refugees were streaming westwards, checking traffic, holding up military movement, demoralizing the soldiers.

It was said that there were twenty-three million refugees in Germany by the middle of February. All the prisoners knew what this meant, since four or five years ago they had taken part in it themselves, and it had been the story of their times. Now they heard of it in Germany. Miles of road-blocks. Carts and wagons loaded with bundles of clothes, food, a few of a lifetime's possessions, snatched up in the middle of the night, and old folk sitting amongst them. Children in arms by the roadside.

Horses and sheep and oxen driven by little girls. The military traffic riding down the wedges of civilians, and then suddenly the air bombing, just above their heads, or the first shell falling; and the hysterical scattering to woods and fields, and the bodies left lying on the roads. All this was coming home to those who had first launched it. The Russians were on the way. *Die Russen, Die Russen kommen.*

A few trickles from this exodus arrived in the village of Durham. Alan saw the wagons below, lining the bridge, and the village children pointing out the castle to the refugee children. Little groups collected and rumours spread. Two Silesians, a boy and a girl who had reached Durham station by train in the bitter cold, before the river thawed, had been taken out of the cattle trucks dead; it was said to have been the fate of hundreds. Food was running short; the queues could be seen from the castle. The houses were crowded to the attics and the population doubled. None of the refugees had seen the Russians. They had seen planes and heard guns. One day they had been ordered to remain in Breslau, or in Marienberg, on pain of death, and the next day to move west. Wherever they went the terror drilled into them by their guilty rulers spread. The sentries did not know what to believe. Nobody knew. Nothing was known about the Russians only a vast atavistic fear.

Alan saw the sentries on their little square, inside the battlements, being taught to destroy Russian tanks with dummy grenades. An invalided N.C.O. was telling them to wake up.

'It's the Russians this time,' he shouted. 'It's not prisoners you'll be looking after. Go on, run. Throw it! Further! Keep your eyes open.'

The sentries asked the prisoners what were the likely limits of the British, American and Russian zones. Would they be taken into Siberia? Some thought they were not important enough to matter; for the poor, they said, with resignation or exaggerated self-pity, life is the same under any government. They cursed the inefficiency of their leaders, but they followed as ever and learnt to throw the new grenades. They had lost all power to

think. Two Swiss diplomatists who reached the castle from Berlin told the prisoners the same story. The Germans were no longer able to think. They had no time, and they had lost the power. Resigned, dazed, organized, atrophied: that is what they were at Schloss Durheim.

Treidfeld continued to take *appels* and count the prisoners conscientiously. Sometimes he was in a bad temper, sometimes still agreeable. Once a fortnight he would arrive late, with lines under his eyes, and they knew that he had been with a girl in the village. He still cursed the French for their bad discipline. He remained correct. He gave the impression that he would go on dully obeying orders until there were no more. If he received orders from another Power, perhaps he would obey them, perhaps he would refuse and be shot. The Commandant never appeared in the court-yard now. His relations with Lissow were near breaking point. He had always despised Lissow, and stayed on terms with him only because he had no alternative. Now, here and there, he began to speak his real opinions, as a professional soldier of breeding. He made a speech of exhortation to the little garrison, telling them they must do what they were told for the sake of Germany, and said nothing about Hitler or national socialism. Alan saw him on the battlements, chatting with his soldiers, more affable to them than he had ever been.

Lissow made no more pretence of future victory. He had never been a real fanatic, only a timeserver, who could adroitly use the trend of events to his own advantage. He had no strong convictions and no ethical values, and no emotion, unless it was for German literature and German art. He feared that the extreme nazis might send some violent order about the prisoners which it would not be convenient for him to obey. He could not afford to disobey the men who had given him his job, until they had been finally ousted; and he wanted to be on good terms with the prisoners, hoping that they might put in a word for him somewhere. He had never encouraged any brutal act against them, only countless meannesses and dishonesties which he trusted the good-natured British to forget. He knew them better than to

appear servile or ingratiating. He tried to show dignity in defeat. Some of the prisoners said that it was dignity. But he had never yet done anything without an object for himself, and Alan believed that it had been deliberately calculated to appeal to them. It was accompanied by certain favours for the theatre, and a number of long overdue repairs, and some veiled inquiries about prospects in Canada.

The Brigadier had an interview with these three German officers in the Kommandantur. Simon Dempster went as interpreter and told Alan about it afterwards. The Brigadier told Grednitz that he was to surrender his area to the British. It appeared that Grednitz and Lissow had come to some understanding in their personal interests. They said they could not surrender as long as they were under the Dresden command, because it was bound to become known and they would both be shot. Evidently Lissow was not opposed to the idea of surrender himself. After a little parleying Grednitz said that he might consider surrender, at a suitable moment, if he and all his staff and soldiers could be considered as British and not Russian prisoners. He asked the Brigadier for a certificate in writing that he had always treated the prisoners fairly, and an assurance that there would be no reprisals against himself or Lissow. The Brigadier refused to do any such thing. Lissow put on the solemn face which he used in his lectures. He leant forward across the table, white and puffy, with his black stick clutched in one hand.

'You don't understand what is going to happen,' he said.

'What is going to happen?' the Brigadier asked.

'The Russians are *Barbaren*. *Unmensch*. I'm not thinking of ourselves. I'm thinking of what will happen to our women.'

'Did you think of the Russian women when you invaded Russia?' said the Brigadier. 'You are the real savages. I hope you get it back. And you will.'

Lissow's lip began to tremble.

'You don't understand,' he said pitifully. 'In the last war I fought for Germany. In this war my son has given his life for

Germany. In order to do my duty, I have made myself hated by the prisoners. I did not wish it. I like the English. I . . .'

He began to cry. Treidfeld sat apart, saying nothing. He did not cry and he did not ask for any assurances. He was resigned and correct. The English officers sensed his contempt for his two fellow countrymen.

It was decided, that in certain events, Grednitz would surrender the whole of the castle to the British and would allow them to fly a Union Jack from the mast. The Brigadier instructed Major Ford to have one made.

There were air raids now every night. Huge sheets of white and red light cracked the sky open, the castle shuddered, the earth's skull seemed to be splitting. The prisoners watched, pressing against the bars, silent and awestruck. Under the apex of the searchlights the flak streamed up in diagonal jets, and green and crimson flares drifted and hung in the darkness like flaming wrecks at sea. The windows rattled, the iron doors clanged, and the tiles fluttered like a bird's wings. All the lights went out, and the prisoners sat with fat-lamps in their rooms unable to go to sleep. They played the worn-out gramophones. They had records of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*, and played them with glee, pinning, epitomizing the defeat. The music crashed across the yards, and one night Alan saw Lissow's pale face at a window of the Kommandantur, listening to it. All that the legend foretold was happening; the false gods and the false heroes doomed, the Rhine flooded, the temples in flames. Perhaps there was something the Germans enjoyed in so colossal an overthrow. Tomavich had once said to Alan: 'When they can no longer satisfy their streak of sadism, they will yield to their streak of masochism, and wallow in their ruin.' Alan could imagine others, he could imagine Hitler, listening wildly to the same music, hugging their disaster, lacerating their country and themselves.

The Sneak behaved like a deceived woman. He had not yielded to national socialism merely to suit himself, retaining a private independence of his own, like the scheming adaptable

independence of Lissow. He had surrendered body and soul, like Faust to Mephistopheles, to the opaque intoxication, the reassuring lies, and the witchcraft, and he had nothing else. The hold of this witchcraft had depended upon military victory. Now that the victories had turned to ruin, everything had gone, ritual and enchantment, spirit and façade. It was not just the garish erections of the nazi state that had collapsed, but the spurious beliefs established in the minds of millions of young men, who had known nothing else. They found themselves — Germans, never very successful as individuals — without a prop remaining. So they became feverish, craving a lost drug. Some found it in death, hurling themselves side by side into the national suicide. Others, ignorant of anything but war and the glamorous comradeship of war, thought they would flee in bands into the hills, to pillage and sabotage and lay ambushes, until they were caught. Some went into hiding with their bitterness, planning for a romantic day when another chance would come. The Sneak huddled into the worn-out arguments. Why had England not gone with Germany? Look at all Hitler had done. It was the Jews, he cried fiercely, who had started it and who had won from it. The Jews, the Jews! His eyes shot at Alan behind his iron spectacles and his voice was nearly hysterical.

When Alan heard this voice, and saw things like this, he felt sickened. Every night the sirens wailed along the valley, the skyline burst into flame, the lights went out inside and outside the castle, the mill wheel stopped, and the castle began to shudder. When he saw the refugee women and children in the streets below, like cattle, he wished that it could all be over, and those who had to be punished be punished, and the vengeance be finished quickly. He was haunted by the faces of the Continental prisoners in the castle, who had fought against Germany but none the less on the losing side. They had a strained desperate look. They were thinking of their homes and families and troubled for themselves. He wished that those of them who were too old, or too tired and numbed, or too foolish to change, could be sent away to some far country, and there build, if they

chose, their cloud-castle of the past. He wished the world would say to the young and willing and hopeful: To-morrow is really another day. Start now. Construct. The field is clear.

One evening, when the Red Army was sixty miles away, and all were waiting to hear the guns, the prisoners collected in the theatre to see Jim Irving's revue. Larkin had designed the scenery, and Harry had built it. Alan stood at the back, watching the audience come in. They were thin and pale, but very cheerful now. There was Bill Franklin. Bill had been much quieter lately. Perhaps he was thinking about his losses, and what his wife would say. The prolongation of the war had been a blow to him. Five years of captivity had turned him from a spoilt child into a crochety bore, and put him three thousand pounds to the bad. He had something to be silent about. Simon Dempster came in, just not too late to be seen, darting a word here and a word there, bowing to the foreigners, waving to Laharpe, offering cigarettes. Larkin leant against a pillar, his high forehead silhouetted, like a well-known critic. There was Marcus, his eyes crinkling, and Morshead, and Fisher and Fell among the other soldiers at the back. And there were all the soldiers and seamen and airmen who had been Alan's companions during those years. He realized how little he knew about any of them. To some he had seldom even spoken, and soon their ways would part for good. The Commandant entered and took a seat in the front row. There was rustling and whispering, and the prisoners craned to look at him. He wore all his medals and his wide green cloak with the scarlet lining. After he had taken his seat, Treidfeld entered and saluted him. They had rehearsed it, so as to allow the prisoners no chance to gloat. It was noticed that they gave the army salute, which had been forbidden since last August instead of the nazi salute; and that Lissow was not there.

The curtain rose. The show was a story, and the story a dream. It began with the castle, and a prisoner dreaming of England. He sees all the famous English caricatures, who act scenes and sing songs. There was a British Indian Colonel and his wife, and

an ineffectual intellectual in an orange shirt, and a woman in London society, rather like Mrs. Willoughby Howarth, who had gone Russian, and was trying to get introductions to Soviet generals. Jim had neatly parodied them all, and soon the audience were laughing and chuckling, wondering what was coming next, and Alan knew that it was a success.

Fell came forward and sang 'Bladon Races'. After hours of persuasion Fisher had prevailed on him. He had wanted to croon. He had his way afterwards. After the old song there was long applause and he crooned as an encore.

Next the dreamer dreamed that he saw a statue unveiled. A dead march was played, a procession entered, squeezing mock tears out of sponges, a cord was pulled, and there was one of the actors on a horse, in a hunting coat and a top hat, with spurs and an old school tie, and on the plinth the simple inscription: DUKE. He sang:

By special decree
There's a statue of me
And the notice tells people who pass
Don't spit at the
Effigy
Keep off the grass
I'm the last of the upper class.

He jogged on the horse and pulled at the reins in time with the music, and stuck a monocle in his eye and made a ridiculous grimace.

Alan leant forward to Geoff Larkin.

'Like it?'

'Do I? I'm not quite sure. Yes, I think I like it.'

Everyone was laughing now, leaning forward and leaning back, and the words could hardly be heard. The orchestra was standing up to see, and all the Continentals were laughing, French, Serbs, the serious Czechs, the Poles lately arrived from wrecked Warsaw. They did not know what it meant, but they could see it was funny, and anyhow it was the English sense of humour.

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The curtain came across, and rapidly both scene and tempo changed. The dreamer is dreaming now of English love, and the scene is a bank of grass under cypress trees, with one light shining in a distant house, and the prisoners hear the words:

. . . Look, how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold;
There's not the smallest orb which thou beholdest,
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims:
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

It is *The Merchant of Venice*. All are quiet, hanging on the music of the words, Alan felt somebody beside him.

'Are they enjoying it?' asked Jim.

'You can see they are.'

There was not a sound, except the voices speaking the lines, and all seemed to be rapt together, carried gently away into feelings many of them had lost, forgetting themselves, recovering themselves . . .

PORTIA That light we see is burning in my hall;
How far that little candle throws his beams!
So shines a good deed in a naughty world.

NERISSA When the moon shone we did not see the candle.

PORTIA So doth the greater glory dim the less . . .

The scene ended, and the last began. The dreamer awoke, and the reality to which he awoke was that old dream, almost an obsession now, that the castle had taken to air. The wonderful backcloth done by Geoff and Harry began to move, with the lights playing and shifting on it, and they saw the tops of the houses with the villagers in night-caps staring upwards, and then the black clear sky and the moon and the stars, and it really did seem that the stage was the battlements and the castle was in motion, sailing through the clear sky. The sea appeared, and a

white fringe of surf, and then cliffs; and as the backcloth came to rest at these cliffs, the curtains closed, and the applause rose up to them, and afterwards there were Jim and Harry and all the actors bowing. But Alan thought, we were best when we were laughing. Laughter, that is one of the great things. That is the last picture I should like to have of them.

For this time good-bye it was.

They were not to be deceived again. This time the war really was ending.

That night they heard the guns, and the carts rattling over the cobbles, as the refugees moved on, fleeing from the unknown into the unknown. And a few mornings later the prisoners woke up, and it was all over. It became at last as they had hoped it would become, finishing in the simplest way. The German Command dissolved. The sentries went away. They took their bicycles, and put on civilian suits, and rode away to their homes. Those who could not were left wandering round the battlements, or in the village, waiting for someone to give them orders. Alan could not take it in. He and the others walked in and out of the gate, and nobody stopped them. He sat for more than an hour on the battlements, and nobody ordered him to go inside, nobody shouted at him. He was left to look at the country as he had not wanted to look at it for nearly five years.

There was a mild blue sky, with many soft white clouds sauntering through it, and a west wind. It was early spring and the trees were still leafless; their slender top branches made the woods seem like light brown clouds. The dark trunks of the beeches were lit by silver birches; the sky lay between, and under the trees were tawny leaves of last year uncovered by the thaw. It was one of those days when the earth seemed to be suspended on chains of light, swinging, floating. All was light and buoyant and looking forward.

He went to the deserted court-yards of the German quarters. Treidfeld was still there, waiting to make a formal surrender. Grednitz was said to be there, but nobody knew. Lissow had disappeared. Alan did not care where they had gone, any of

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them. He walked with Harry into the village. Harry looked as if he had never been a prisoner. His cheeks were still red, his hair thick, and his eyes sparkled; in a few days he would be with his wife and kids, and the five years would fall away from him.

The guns had been sounding all day, closer and closer, and the panic-stricken haggard refugees were moving on, westwards, southwards, anywhere, the East Prussians and Silesians joined now by a new stream from Saxony. Many of the Durheim people were leaving. Oxen filled the narrow streets, while men and children piled belongings into the ribbed carts and women went round their houses for the last time. Sometimes, as the guns boomed, they looked anxiously towards the bridge, fearing to see the conquerors. The Ukrainian girls stood outside the factory with their arms akimbo and watched; in a few hours their own exile would be over, and they watched the new exile beginning. They said little. Some were even coaxing an old German woman, who was trying to hoist herself into her cart.

'Don't go, mother. No one's going to hurt you.'

'Stay behind. You can't shoot anyone.'

'No, she wants to go. Help her up. That's right.'

They pushed her into the cart, and she sat there among bundles of clothes, like a wrinkled old ape, looking at them suspiciously.

The soldiers had come down from the castle and were laughing with the girls. Fell had one of the prettiest.

'Bit of a shambles, isn't it?' he said to Alan. 'Rather late if they want to get away.'

'You seem to be all right.'

'Oh, I fixed this long ago. They've got the Mayor, did you hear that? The girls got him.'

'Where is he?'

'In the clink. Like to see him?'

'No, thanks.'

'Caught him trying to get out last night. He's for it.'

'Where's Corporal Fisher?'

'Gone to see Elsa.'

When the street was blocked with carts and cattle and group

of refugees preparing to go away, lorries began to pour across the bridge from the east. Their canvas hoods were camouflaged and branches of fir trees had been stuck all over them, as cover from the unceasing air attacks at the front. They swept down on the stupefied villagers, hooting and swerving and rocking, bringing into the town that had been so calm the hubbub and terror of the disintegrating battlefields, scattering children and animals and thundering over the cobbles past the castle. If they slowed down people clung to them.

'Take us with you!'

'No room! No room!'

'Where are they? Where shall we go?'

Alan and Harry stood back from the street. The German soldiers in the lorries were armed, and both of them were in khaki uniform. They could see, inside the lorries, bandaged men lying on top of one another, guns and rifles, and the drawn exhausted faces of the soldiers. Motor cycles swept through, and camouflaged staff cars, with high officers sitting impassive in the back, and then more lorries, and soldiers by themselves on bicycles. The carts began to draw out, pulling up the steep hill past the castle, and those who had decided to stay said good-bye, weeping, to those who had decided to leave. One by one they went out of sight. The men drove, as Alan had seen them often driving out into the fields. The women stared back into the town, uncomprehending, and some of the children were crying, tired by the stress and the inattention of their parents.

Fisher was coming along the bridge.

'How is Elsa?' Alan asked, joking. 'Are you going to get married?'

He noticed Fisher's expression. It was unusually set and grim. Something must have happened.

'She wasn't there,' he answered. 'She's gone away.'

'I'm sorry.'

Fisher stood with his hands in his pockets, looking at the ground.

'Maybe it's just as well,' he said. 'I feel bad about it, all the

same. I don't know where she's gone. I'd like to have done something for her.'

'Wasn't there any message?'

'No, nothing. She never gave me a hint of it.'

He looked Alan in the face. His eyes were blazing, and his lips compressed, and he seemed to be controlling himself.

'I've been into the concentration camp,' he said. 'The sentries have all left. The Jews are there still.'

'Are they free, then?'

'Those that are still alive. I never want to see anything like it again. You go. Have a look for yourself.'

He walked away. Harry, too, went back to the castle. Towards evening the town became quieter. The soldiers and their girls had disappeared. A few German civilians and British officers wandered through the streets. A girl in black, with golden brown hair, leant against the parapet of the bridge, staring into the river; Alan recognized the younger of the two women from the white house. He thought he would walk out of the village for a little. He did not want to go back to the castle yet, or to see anyone, or to speak to anyone; only to feel his freedom. The ploughed fields deepened to violet shadows at the corners, but where the sinking sun caught them they were golden; and the indifferent women, with green and scarlet and white scarves round their heads, still sowed the harvest which this year others would reap. The shadows danced from field to field. If he chose to walk along the chalky road, or turn off into the woods or into the speckled villages, nobody would stop him. It was all his.

When he walked back into Durheim, the sun had set and an afterglow coloured the walls of the steep streets, the empty shop fronts, the shuttered houses. The guns sounded less often, but very near. It was the no-man's-land and no-man's-time between the flight of the defeated and the entry of the victors.

He had an impulse to look at the white house, and strolled through the factory yards along the river bank, where big ice-floes were still lying, not yet melted. After all, no damage had been done; the Russians would need to use the factories. The

huge doors of what had once been the princely stables were open, and the horses that used to bring rations to the castle had been taken away. In front of the house the refugees had trodden in the grass; their carts had made ruts across the lawn.

The windows were not blacked out, and a light was shining on the ground floor. Standing in the shadow of the wall, he looked into a room where a lamp was burning. The two German women were sitting at a table, the older and the younger. Both wore black. The room was in disorder. Plates for many people lay unwashed all over the table, and the floor was strewn with bedding. After a little the two women got up. They kissed one another, and the younger went out; a light shone from a top window, throwing a reflection on the grass so that Alan had to move. He continued gazing into the downstairs room. The older woman was standing by the fireplace, resting one hand on the mantelpiece, and staring at a photograph of a young man. She looked at it a long while without stirring, her face set and lifeless. It reminded him of Tomavich, and Tug and Brian, and the battles still being fought, and things he wanted to forget.

It was dark, and the moon had risen, as he walked back towards the bridge. No one floodlit the castle now. Flames darted along the gaunt battlements, where the prisoners were burning bunks, chairs, tables, German newspapers, propaganda books, hated rubbish, making a giant bonfire of everything that reminded them. A motor cycle crossed the bridge, ridden by a man in a strange uniform, then another, then a lorry. The heroes were entering. It was incredible. Men from thousands of miles away, men from behind the Asiatic mountains, from the huge plains and the inland seas, men he had never seen and five years ago scarcely heard of, pouring across the bridge. Go on! he wanted to say. Faster, farther! You have freed us. Free Tomavich. Free the wretched. Free all who are starving, tortured, mutilated, at their last gasp. Free all who desire it.

He went towards them, eager to know them and to believe in them, and for the other great armies from the west to join with them. The strip of light on the lawn went out, and the house

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was almost in darkness now, just a faint grey shadow. His thoughts were pulled back to the two women, the mother and the widow, alone in the masterless house. He wondered if at any moment of exultation there would always be despair and if triumph would ever come unaccompanied by punishment. Darkness was always there, all round, into which everyone he would ever love and he himself would one day go. The darkness was the truth, and the light was also the truth, and to-day a nightmare was over, and revert he could not. The lorries went up the hill and on, indifferently, past the castle, continuing the advance. Cheering poured from the battlements, where for the prisoners the climax had arrived. The moonlight settled calmly on the housetops. The most passionate longing for life, and for living people and the living world, and to work with them and for them, welled up in him. And at last he could say aloud the words he had been waiting so long to say, Dostoevski's words of liberation, gratitude, and hope:

Yes, farewell!

Liberty! New life! Resurrection from the dead!

Inexpressible moment!

It had been true, in their way, for Dostoevski's nation. It was going to be true for him. If only it could be true for the whole castle, for everyone, now, to-day, all over the world!

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